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ABSTRACT

A 3-year Literacy/English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program is described that was established in 1988 to improve access to literacy for Rhode Island's adult non-native speakers of English. In this handbook, the two literacy facilitators associated with the program explore issues significant to a more learner-centered practice of addressing the literacy needs of adult non-native speakers of English. Models are described for professional development, preparation of volunteers, and instruction with learners interacting with print. The intention is to help demystify the process of ESL/literacy for providers and to support new forms of education in literacy. A brief review of the literature on learner-centered practice is given, followed by descriptions of specific practices and discussions and examples of action research. Outreach efforts are also described. Although the ESL/Literacy Program reached fewer individuals than it intended in some areas, it surpassed expectation in others and contributed to significant change in cross-program awareness and cooperation within and outside the agency. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education) (LB)

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LITERACY/ESL PROGRAM

LITERACY FOR ADULT
NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS
OF ENGLISH

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

The International Institute of Rhode Island

FL800405

A Handbook for Practitioners

ESL/literacy for adult non-native speakers of English

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Literacy/ESL Program, International Institute of Rhode Island 1991

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preface

Many practitoners' writings and studies have preceded ours and have undoubtedly influenced our work. This handbook is not meant to supplant those that came before, nor is it intended to cover the entire scope of literacy practice for adult non native speakers of English.

A bibliography of critical sourcebooks on hand at the Literacy Center at the International Institute of Rhode Island is available upon request. Of those, we would recommend *Talking Shop, Making Meaning, Making Change* (from the English Family Literacy Project, University of Massachusetts/Boston, 1989 and 90), *Language and Culture in Conflict* (Nina Wallerstein, 1983, Addison-Wesley), *Freire for the Classroom: A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching* (Ira Shor, ed., 1987, Boynton/Cook), *Literacy from the Inside Out* (Rachel Martin, 1989, 302 Arlington St., Watertown, MA 02172), *Literacy for Empowerment: A Resource Handbook for Community Based Educators* (Association for Community Based Education, 1988), *Many Literacies : Modules for Training Adult Beginning Readers* (Marilyn Gillespie, Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1990) and *Participatory Literacy Education* (Arlene Fingeret and Paul Jurmo, eds., Jossey-Bass, 1989).

This document records and reflects three years' work and interaction with learners and facilitators within and around one program. We feel that much of our learning and our models are replicable, and in that spirit present them in the hope of furthering ongoing dialogues about literacies. All feedback is welcome and appreciated.

Francine Filipek Collignon
Janet Isserlis
Sara Smith
January, 1991

Literacy/ESL Program
International Institute of Rhode Island
Providence, Rhode Island

introduction

rationale

In February 1988 the International Institute of Rhode Island opened a three year Literacy/English as a Second Language Program. The goal of this program was to improve access to literacy for Rhode Island's adult non native speakers of English.

As early as 1979, Institute educational staff had identified the need for capability of agency English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to address the literacy needs of non native English speaking adults. Every year in each of the Institute's four educational programs a number of students showed little progress in acquiring spoken and written English. Teachers, sensing a connection between slow progress and student literacy level, repeatedly expressed frustration and feelings of inadequacy in dealing with literacy in the ESL classroom. The agency began to refer students who stated a need for literacy assistance to other programs. Still, a significant number of those learners enrolled in Institute programs made little progress in their own and in their teachers' eyes.

In 1985 the Institute set out to secure funding for a literacy program which would enhance literacy resources for non native English speaking adults in Rhode Island. The new program would offer literacy classroom opportunities to students requiring literacy assistance prior to entry into mainstream ESL classes. At the same time the program would train ESL teachers in understanding literacy and in addressing student literacy in the ESL classroom. This training would extend beyond the Institute to teachers in other adult educational programs and to staff in social service agencies serving non literate adults statewide. A literacy center would be established at the Institute which would provide a place for teachers to observe literacy/ESL classes, examine materials, access professional literature on language acquisition and literacy and join a professional network of educators exploring issues related to adult literacy for non native speakers of English.

By late 1987 the Institute had secured funding for a three year project, and the first staff were hired. Funding for the program was provided by:

the State of Rhode Island
the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust
the Hasbro Charitable Foundation
the Providence Journal Charitable Foundation
Rhode Island Workforce 2000
the Hazard Charitable Trust
the Rhode Island Foundation
the P.H. Prince Testamentary Trust
the Nortek Charitable Trust
the Textron Charitable Trust
the Fleet Charitable Trust.

Once funding for the program had been secured, the Institute launched a national and local search for a program coordinator. During the period of program design and proposal writing, staff had been painfully aware of the Institute's lack of authoritative posture toward adult literacy. We knew we needed a program in which we could all learn more about literacy; yet as we developed our proposals, funders let us know that they valued well-informed approaches. In seeking a program coordinator, then, we looked for an individual with a good deal of recent experience in an adult literacy program for non native speakers of English -- an expert, as it were.

Exactly the sort of "expertise" we were seeking was not to be found. Those individuals we knew or knew of who seemed to have the appropriate degree of experience had already committed their efforts to other programs. The funding we had in hand could support three full-time staff; our agency model for program staffing suggested one coordinator who would coordinate and two facilitators who would teach. Teacher training, research and community outreach all needed to be divided among the three staff. Between February and May we hired a Program Coordinator who had recently administered an adult literacy program and two Literacy Specialists -- one a former Refugee Program Coordinator and facilitator at the Institute and the other a local educator with extensive community experience, including literacy. The term "Specialist" was meant to indicate teaching responsibilities and more.

From the spring of 1988 until the present (December 1990), Literacy/ESL Program staff have engaged in many different learning projects with students, teachers and community service providers, always under the goal of improving access to literacy for adult non native English speakers. The collaborative efforts of Literacy/ESL Program staff have extended throughout the

Institute with far reaching effects not only for literacy learning opportunities but also for teaching, teacher education and program administration agency wide. In the course of the program, a respect for the expertise already housed at the Institute has developed on the part of administration and teaching staff. This handbook, written for practitioners and by practitioners, documents the development of the program in its many facets and the changes which occurred within the agency and the community during the program.

In this handbook the two Literacy Facilitators (as they ultimately chose to name themselves), Janet Isserlis and Francine Filipek Collignon, explore issues significant to a more learner centered practice in addressing the literacy needs of adult non native speakers of English. The models the document describes for professional development, preparation of volunteers and instruction with learners interacting with print act as a basis for potential reflection on teaching practice and replication in program development. Their close up accounts of learners aim to enable readers to locate practitioners' most frequently voiced concerns and suggested responses in the context of learners' needs. Throughout, Janet's and Fran's intent is to work toward demystifying the process of ESL/literacy for potential providers and to support new forms of education in literacy, thereby making literacy/ESL more accessible to non native speakers of English.

The International Institute of Rhode Island

To view the development of the Literacy/ESL Program with some understanding, the reader may find it helpful to have an overview of the agency in which the program came to be. The International Institute of Rhode Island is a community based nonprofit agency providing educational and social services to Rhode Island's immigrants and refugees. The Institute's mission is to enable Rhode Island's recent and longtime immigrants and refugees to participate fully in the economic, educational, social and civic opportunities open to all Americans, and to assist them in becoming independent, productive members of society. The Institute realizes its mission through the development and operation of programs offering educational, legal, immigration, vocational and personal services to the non native English speakers of Rhode Island.

The Institute was started in 1921. In 1984 the agency merged with Project Persona, a local educational organization for non

native English speaking adults. The merger enabled the Institute to match its high quality casework services with equally professional educational services. Since 1984 the Institute has operated two major divisions: the Social Service Division and the Educational Division. The Social Service Division offers multilingual immigration and social services to immigrants and refugees of all ethnic backgrounds. These services include legal immigration counseling, family reunification, legalization and naturalization casework, refugee resettlement, and translating and notarization services.

The Institute's Educational Division has offered English as a Second Language instruction to Rhode Island's immigrants and refugees since 1971. Currently, the Educational Division offers five programs: 1) the English Language Center which provides ESL instruction and cultural orientation; 2) the Vocational Training Program which offers ESL, orientation to the world of work, job-specific training, volunteer internship and job placement; 3) the Citizenship/ESL Program, which helps applicants for United States Citizenship prepare for the Naturalization examination; 4) the Second Step Amnesty Program, which offers ESL and pre-GED Instruction to individuals pursuing legal status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986; 5) the Literacy/ESL Program, which offers literacy classroom learning opportunities, teacher educa-tion and community outreach vis a vis literacy for non native speakers of English.

Funding for Institute programs comes from a variety of public and private sources. Job Training Partnership Act, Department of Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement and State of Rhode Island funds have been regular public sources of funding for Institute programs. Local and national foundations, as well as membership fees, token tuition payments and gifts have completed the Institute's funding base.

Through its two divisions the Institute serves over 5,000 immigrants and refugees each year. Over 50% of the Institute's clients are of Hispanic descent; 23% are of Asian descent. The majority of the Institute's clients are poor, raising families on less than $25,000 a year. The Educational Division reports that over 90% of its students are at or below the poverty level.

The Institute's educational programs are well known locally and nationally for high quality adult educational services. Institute staff have collaborated with a number of large organizations in the development of curricula and materials,

disseminated to adult education programs across the United States. Among curricula and materials which agency staff have developed are: 1) the Mainstream English Language Training Program, which developed a competency based curriculum and the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), oral and proficiency tests for national use in adult refugee ESL programs (1983); 2) a Consumer Education Curriculum for the Rhode Island Department of Education (1984); 3) the American Council for Nationalities Service's Primary Preventive Mental Health Project, a national program which worked to create a replicable teacher training model to assist refugees in coping effectively with social pressures which might eventually contribute to serious mental dysfunction (1986); 4) *ESL civics; Planning and implementing English and civics programs: A handbook,* developed under the sponsorship of the American Council for Nationalities Service and the National Council of La Raza for national use in Second Step Amnesty programs (1988).

In addition to the development of educational materials, Institute staff have shared their learning with other educators through presentations at local and national conferences and in international seminars. Agency staff are present annually at the national TESOL convention as well as conventions of the International Reading Association and other regional conferences pertaining to ESL and literacy. Additionally, staff have participated in the development of a teacher training film used by Literacy Volunteers of America, in an exchange of practice and theory with Lehman College (New York) and the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (London) and in the development of teacher based research initiatives.

The Institute is one of several local organizations offering instruction in English as a Second Language to adult learners. Unfortunately, the availability of adult ESL classes in Rhode Island falls far short of community demand. Many local programs have restrictive enrollment policies. Some programs restrict enrollment to residents of a particular location or to individuals of particular ethnic backgrounds or English language proficiency or literacy levels. Entry into some programs is attached to applicant ability to meet economic criteria. Unless restricted by the funder, International Institute programs are open to non native English speaking adults, regardless of ethnic, educational or socioeconomic background.

Every Institute educational program maintains a waiting list. Waiting lists for the agency's larger programs have been known

	PRE-LITERATE LEARNERS (Pilot class participants and potential home-bound participants) 'Pre-literate learners need...'	LEARNERS (in existing educational programs at Persona and elsewhere with varying levels of literacy) 'Learners need...'	ESL POPULATION (individuals not in educational programs within the entire range of literacy levels) 'The ESL Population needs...'	EDUCATIONAL STAFF AT PERSONA 'Educational staff at Persona need...'	EDUCATIONAL STAFF OF OTHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS 'Educational staff at other educational institutions need...'	COMMUNITY 'The community needs...'
Programmatic Needs	- more learning opportunities - learning opportunities at convenient sites or at home - learning opportunities at appropriate times - curricula focussing on student needs - literacy materials appropriate to student culture, age and interests - bilingual program capability	- more learning opportunities - enhanced learning opportunities in terms of literacy - means of self-evaluation - literacy materials appropriate to student culture, age and interests	- more learning opportunities - learning opportunities at convenient sites, at home or at the worksite - learning opportunities at appropriate times; options for length of classes, duration of enrollment - instruction that meets individual student needs - material geared to individual student backgrounds, needs, goals, preferences, interests - learner-centered program content	- more time to prepare classes - better access to agency resources - better coordination of volunteer resources - curricula geared to student literacy needs - better student assessment, placement and evaluation procedures - materials appropriate to student and program needs - familiarity with purpose and use of materials	- more funding - more personnel - staff cultural sensitivity - curricula appropriate to student needs - instructor awareness of literacy methodology - appropriate educational and evaluative materials - teacher familiarity with the purpose and use of materials	- information about literacy issues - information about available literacy servic
Situational Needs	- child care - transportation - counseling - assistance with family responsibilities - acculturation assistance	- child care - transportation - counseling - assistance with family responsibilities - acculturation assistance - emotional support re life tasks - legal assistance	- child care - transportation - access to literacy/ educational information and instruction - energy - time - mental and physical health	- ability to address student literacy needs adequately	- information about literacy issues - information about available literacy services	- referral information
Attitudinal Needs	- self-esteem - freedom from fears of failure, isolation, and cultural expectations re gender, age, role - consciousness about the role of literacy	- motivation - confidence - retention of cultural identity	- self-esteem - acknowledgement of biases of role, age gender, culture - confidence - motivation - relief from post-traumatic stress	- appropriate student placements - sensitivity to cultural differences among students - awareness of intergenerational issues/conflicts - openness to new ways of viewing student progress	- cultural sensitivity	- sensitivity t needs of individual constituents

	Pre-literate learners need	Learners need	The ESL Population needs	Educational staff at Persona need	Ed. staff at other institutions need	The community needs
Interactive Needs	- access to literacy brokers - opportunities for socialization - supportive learning environments - comfortable instructional styles - opportunity to use cooperative strategies	- supportive learning environment - comfortable instructional style	- supportive learning environment - comfortable instructional style	- better communication within the agency - access to the broad goals of literacy learners		- ability to provide educational services sufficient to community demands - improved access to existing resources
Cognitive Needs	- literacy skills	- literacy skills - student progress in reading and writing in accordance with own goals	- language skills	- awareness of how to assist students in determining their literacy goals - understanding of the scope of literacy - awareness of how to use relevant literacy curriculum effectively	- awareness of how to assist students in determining literacy goals - understanding of the scope of litracy - awareness of how to use relevant literacy curriculum effectively - knowledge of research findings on adult literacy for non native speakers of English - awareness of barriers to student participation in educational programs	- information about available literacy/educational programs - information about non native English speaking populations - information about adult literacy for non native speakers of English
Metacognitive Needs	- awareness of potential to transfer native language literacy skills to English - strategies for interacting with print	- strategies for interacting with print	- strategies for interacting with print - language acquisition skills	- awareness of language strategies students need to interact with print - ability to recognize overt student language strategies - awareness of connections between affective and cognitive elements of learning	- ability to recognize literacy needs of clients - ability to recognize their own needs as providers in responding to clients' literacy needs - awareness of connections between affective and cognitive elements of learning	- recognition of literacy's broad scope and its ramifications community wide

to exceed 300. Because of the high demand for the Institute's educational services, Institute staff maintain a close contact with the network of other local ESL providing agencies. To ensure the ability of Institute staff to make appropriate referrals to those who seek educational services after enrollment is filled, the Institute maintains a directory of adult ESL services, which is updated annually. Written information on available alternative program options is given to all waiting list applicants.

To the extent that it is known and documented, information about existing educational programs, their services, target groups and access routes enables Institute staff to make appropriate referrals for learners that the agency's programs cannot serve. Information about gaps in overall community educational offerings, as well as information on specific educational programs' needs, provides a complete picture of community educational resources. With an assessment of these offerings and needs, the Institute's Literacy/ESL Program began in mid 1988.

needs assessment

A needs assessment was conducted by the staff of the Literacy/ESL Program during its first six months (February through July '88). The needs assessment contains information relative to the needs of prospective literacy/ESL learners, collected from interviews with learners, teachers and administrators at IIRI as well as from other service providers. In order to ascertain needs on a variety of levels, interviews were also conducted among the ESL population with individuals who had not accessed education in literacy. The informational chart following this narrative, derived from interview data, reflects several categories of identified needs to be addressed in order to accomplish increased access to literacy for non native speakers of English.

The needs assessment, conducted by staff members during the initial months of the Literacy/ESL Program, indicated that immigrants and refugees in the state needed better access to English as a Second Language literacy. They joined the estimated thousands of American born adults in Rhode Island needing assistance with literacy.

Rhode Island's non native speakers of English represent predominantly, though by no means exclusively, Hispanic, Portuguese and Southeast Asian populations. They comprise a

socioeconomically diverse population. Some are severely economically disadvantaged due to their recent arrival to the country/state. Others experience chronic unemployment or entry level job status. Still others are already more upwardly mobile, advancing in employment and/or educational status or managing additional jobs to supplement their incomes. Some people suffer poor health or permanent disability as a result of their previous experiences, making it impossible for them to work or attend classes regularly.

The needs assessment focussed primarily on people with whom potential or actual literacy learners came into contact: health/mental health, educational and social service providers (sometimes other clients as well as staff members in these agencies and institutions); grass roots community leaders, and bilingual bicultural workers. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs of literacy learners and draw implications from the totality of their needs, broad based questions from interviewers often developed into more specific inquiries to these informants; e.g., an inquiry about previous education lead to more probing questions about supportive learning environments. Additionally, assessment information came from interviews with people who were not currently in educational programs, but who stated a need for education in literacy. Some of these interviewees had previously dropped out of programs (having lost interest or failed to progress substantially in a mainstream ESL class); others had never attended classes due to a variety of reasons. They represent a segment of the "invisible" thousands of people in statistical estimates on illiteracy.

Needs were reported as they related both to providers and to learners in four broad categories: attitudinal, circumstantial, programmatic, and pedagogical concerns.[1] These categorical responses reflect a compendium of needs and/or barriers to learning. Barriers to learning included individuals' self perceptions and attitudes about learning/literacy or perceptions of literacy and effective instruction. Learners' needs also included issues such as transportation, childcare and scheduling, location and focus of classes.

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[1] adapted from the work of K. Patrica Cross (*Adults as learners: Increasing participation and facilitating learning*, (1988) Jossey-Bass), and Susan Lytle, Thomas W. Marmore and Faith H. Penner (*Literacy theory in practice: Assessing reading and writing of low-literate adults*, paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, April, 1986).

The data compiled by Literacy/ESL Program staff on the Needs Assessment Chart record needs and barriers to literacy provision. Data reflect some commonalties among learners, although practitioners recognized that particular needs present themselves in combinations which differ from learner to learner. Individual learners, consequently, need sensitive providers who recognize, respect and interact with their particular realities.

Inadequate access to information about literacy programs as well as to access to the instruction itself repeatedly surfaced among informants as a barrier to literacy provision. The substantial need for ancillary support services in many forms -- childcare, counseling, and transportation -- also emerged from interviewees as an issue mitigating against access to literacy. Lack of prior education and/or native language literacy, unfamiliarity with Roman alphabetic script and unsuccessful prior introductions to print in ESL classes comprised additional situational factors presenting barriers to education in literacy. Educational providers' insufficient outreach to community based organizations in geographical proximity to learners was considered a gap in disseminating information to learners about provision.

Additionally, pedagogical concerns, articulated by educational service providers (e.g. that affective, cognitive, metacognitive and interactive factors figure strongly) stimulated further research and investigation on the part of the Literacy/ESL Program staff. Through reflection on the needs assessment and practice with beginning literacy learners (in pilot classes during the needs assessment period), the Literacy/ESL Program staff gained a preliminary overview of the needs to be addressed within the provision of training, instruction and creation of a literacy center.

goals and objectives

At the same time that staff were conducting the Literacy/ESL Program's needs assessment, they were also documenting their own pedagogical biases and assumptions in the form of an educational statement. In this statement they outlined their educational philosophies and approached working definitions of literacy. They also cited educators with whose work and/or thoughts their own concurred. The original educational statement is not included in this documentation, because educational philosophy has evolved during the life of the Literacy/ESL Program, as the writers hope will be evident in this document, and because staff prefer not to present a static statement of pedagogy.

From the needs assessment and the educational statement, staff developed a program goal and objectives, which they presented to other staff within the agency and to the program's advisory committee for feedback. Responses to the goals, which were mixed, reflected varying assumptions about learning and the learners as well as varying definitions of literacy. In the ensuing dialogue with agency staff, Board members, funders and other educators, Literacy/ESL Program staff recognized a) a widening gap in definitions of literacy and understandings of learner needs between themselves and those with whom they needed to work and b) a desire and a need to enter into dialogue with those concerned in order to shrink that gap. Realizing, additionally, that such a dialogue would be a long term process, staff decided to revise their program goals to broad based, realistic, understandable goals which all those concerned could embrace. The program goals they established follow.

Goal:	To facilitate access to literacy for non native speakers of English.
Objectives:	To develop a model of literacy learning for adult non native speakers of English.
	To provide literacy instruction to pre-literate adult ESL learners. To serve 50 students.
	To enhance learning opportunities vis a vis literacy in IIRI instruction programs. Serve 1,000 students.
	To develop a program of preparation for volunteer tutors of literacy/ESL. To prepare 40 volunteers to address the literacy needs of students in IIRI educational programs and in home-study setting.
	To create a pre-literacy curriculum guide, an ESL/ literacy curriculum and materials appropriate to the adult literacy/ESL classroom.
	To participate in the development of off-site community-based adult literacy/ESL programs to serve individuals not being served by existing programs.
	To provide technical assistance on the subject of literacy/ESL to teachers at other educational institutions and at worksites. To serve 100 teachers.

To disseminate information regularly on community literacy needs and issues to network of educators and social service providers.

learner centered practice

what does that mean? *A view from out there* [1]

Two overriding assumptions have shaped the work done in the Literacy/ESL Program: literacy exists within a sociocultural context, and classroom content is driven by learners' needs. Classroom organization breaks out into two broad strands: **recurring events** (such as generation of weekly classroom news, journal writing, and other language experience activities pertaining to regular and recursive events [week-end, workday, etc.]) from which **themes** evolve. Learner activity, needs and concerns dictate content. These organizational strands provide a framework within which content finds structure and form, in the larger parameters created by learners' goals.

The literature on student centered learning and teaching for adults ranges from the closely conservative views of **Reading Today** (the newsletter of the International Reading Association) to the explicitly political views of literacy trainers writing in Literacy for Empowerment, published by the Association of Community Based Education. Practitioners in Britain, Canada and Australia have long advocated a student centered approach, while acknowledging the range of practice this approach actually entails.

A recent text issued from an ALBSU[2] provider delineates various aspects of student participation in adult basic education (ABE) programs within that framework. [3] The text examines the various components of student centered literacy practice, including access, assessment, environment and the points of view of students, tutors and organizers. It calls attention to the importance of students initiating various parts of their study process and the need for facilitators to aim "to be treated as a resource in someone's learning program - to be made use of, then discarded when no longer needed. We should be aiming to

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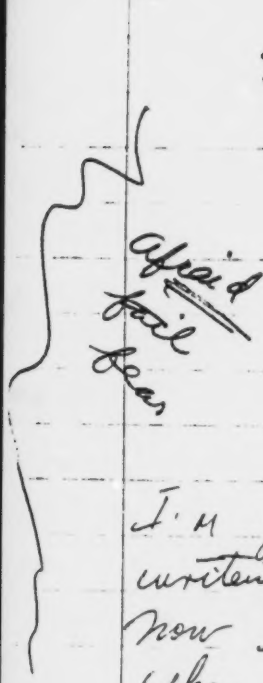
[1] The first part of this two part section is a review of some of the literature on leaner centered practice. References cited are indicated by footnotes and are listed in the bibliography following the text.

[2] ALBSU: The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7DA, England.

[3] *Student Participation: Some of the features of the A.B.E. model as developed in a number of centres over a number of years.* (no author, no date. Received, 6/89).



I'm Joe and in this picture I was
writeing a letter about my family
now I lose my afraid to write because
when I begin to class two months ago
I was afraid for to write

121 13 89

they are my daghters
their names are Elda Ruth and
Kania Elda is 13 year old.
Ruth is 8 year old and Kania 7 year
they goes to the william de bute school
and perry school.
they are good girls.
Elda like to clean her bedroom
and keep clean.
they play together all the time
cristina aldana

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make people ultimately independent of us, rather than the opposite." (p. 1). As students learn how to learn, they gain access to alternate and ancillary ways of coming to gain the skills and knowledge they need; as they gain independent learning strategies, their learning options and opportunities increase.

Carmen St. John Hunter[4] points to the context specific aspect of learner centered education -- that each situation will demand a particular set of events and activities to occur in order to meet learners' needs in a given context. Francis Kazemek, in a synthesis of the state of adult literacy provision in America, also emphasizes the need to situate literacy in social, cultural and political contexts. Alison Murphy [5]recounts the development of literacy curricula negotiated by learners to meet their needs as members of a tenants' association. Their involvement in community action generated and shaped literacy work needed within the scope of the tenants' campaign and "used immediately in a practical context". Murphy cites Brian Street's and her own observations in pointing out the misuse of 'remote' literacy practices. (Street is known for his work on literacy and social context). A narrow definition of literacy is inflicted upon learners by well-meaning but under-prepared volunteers and tutors; Street's suggestion of the multiplicity of literacies necessitates an examination of learners' views of what literacy is and does. Kazemek, too, speaks of the discrepancies between learners' and tutors' notions of literacy. An understanding of these frames of reference is critical to the development of student centered learning. How do literate people view and interact with the world differently from those who are not literate, and by extension, how do literate people view opportunities for education in literacy differently from those who are not literate?

Learners' first experiences with many educational programs occur during the intake and assessment processes. Although until recently the assessment procedure was viewed as a separate (and often necessarily evil) component of literacy programs, the role of assessment itself is shifting and becoming more explicitly learner centered. Nina Wallerstein points out that a true needs assessment is "not completed before the first day of class, nor is the listening done by the teacher alone. As content is drawn from learners' daily lives, listening becomes an ongoing process

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[4] ACBE, p. 158.

[5] Murphy, A. (1987). Is student centered learning a form of tokenism? *Viewpoints* , No. 7, p. 23.

involving both teachers and students as co-learners and co-explorers." (Wallerstein, qtd. in ACBE, p. 21). Susan Lytle et al. at the University of Pennsylvania underscore and explicate the importance of learners' roles in the assessment process; Lenore Balliro at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute has done extensive work on assessment, particularly for non native speakers of English in a learner centered context, which has influenced our practice. [6]

Generally, the literature points to the possibilities inherent in all aspects of literacy learning for inclusion of student input; the amount and degree of such inclusion varies as well. Practitioners need to gain awareness of the fact that their very practice, although drawing on student input to some extent, still perpetuates a power base: the teacher knows how and what s/he will have the class do; the learner then does it. "It is too much of one person knowing what the other would like to know and keeping it that way." [7] Murphy suggests that practitioners make their methodologies known to learners. She cites Robert Merry's speculation that "many tutors may not (make methodologies available to students) because they themselves do not fully understand what they are doing" (p. 24).

> There have been few opportunities to clarify our own thinking. Consequently we have not been able to make our assumptions explicit, to share them with students or to elicit students' understandings of these relationships and processes. Until we do this it is difficult to envisage how we can respond adequately to students' perceptions that there are things about language and how it works that they need to know but that we are unwilling to share. Murphy, p. 24

One example of making methodology known to students occurred during summer breaks at IIRI. ESL/Literacy students, given the option of continuing classes once a week through the summer, expressed interest in studying more frequently. As described in the writing on Room 6, Fran and I presented learners with the option of meeting independently a second day, to work on dialog journals and to generate classroom news. These are processes which had been modeled and made explicit throughout the previous school year. Students were quite familiar with

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[6] see also the toolbox section for more information on the Literacy/ESL Program's assessment material, evaluation grid and learner worksheets which comprise a component of ongoing learner assessment.

[7] Gardner, qtd. in Murphy, p. 24.

the process and methodologies involved. Subsequently, about three quarters of the original student body returned for this one day of independent study weekly. Some learners took on a teacher's role in helping others read and write. In addition to maintaining the learning community that had been built during the previous months, learners demonstrated that they were capable of expanding and developing that community whose methodologies they understood, through ongoing attendance and participation during the summer months.

Project participants at the Independent Learning Project at Morley College developed "a training syllabus to facilitate learning for autonomy" (Murphy, p.24), which had learners taking control of their own learning as its goal. Workers at the Project found that the most meaningful way in which learners could take control of their learning was to engage in "discussion about what learning is; setting goals and assessing progress; sharing knowledge about the strategies and techniques we use; and exploring areas which may be unfamiliar to many tutors and students" (ibid). They found that one result of demystifying the teaching process may be that practitioners find ways in which to include learners in that process -- as peer teachers, as part of a teacher education team, etc.

As literacy education (for learners) moves in a student centered direction, so too, does teacher education. Jenny Brown, a literacy practitioner in England, notes that

> if practitioners were generally in touch with ... theory, and related innovative practice, and able to generate new skills from this, we would be able to offer a better student centered service and argue the case for "literacy for a participatory democracy" in wider debates and dialogues about the contexts, methods, purposes and effects of literacy learning in ...twentieth century post industrial society.[8]

Brown alludes to the fact that practitioners may be inclined toward improving their practice, but often lack access to needed information/research/literature and time in order to do so. (This view is reiterated in Juliet McCaffery's paper "Practice and Research: A Practitioner's Perspective", and increasingly throughout the literature as a real obstacle to increased growth and learning for practitioners). Inservice programs must be

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[8] Jenny Brown, Literacy for Participation, in *Viewpoints* , Issue No. 4, *Literacy for what?* ALBSU, 1985.

restructured in ways that allow for specific adaptation of curricula, methodologies, etc., to meet the particularities of local needs.

"Research through practice illustrates that research need not be remote and academic but can be a valuable classroom based and student centered activity enabling those involved in adult literacy to reflect upon it and influence its development" (Murphy, p. 24). Students can and often should be included in the research process. Adult literacy students in England "stressed the value of their own achievements and the fact that tutors cannot know how it feels to have problems with literacy. Practice therefore can only be improved by listening to students as equal partners rather than passive recipients" (RaPAL Bulletin, p. 9].

Alison Murphy defines student centered learning "to mean collaborative learning which validates students' skills, experience and potential and is directed according to students' choices and purposes. This approach enables students to take responsibility for their own learning in which tutors[9] act as facilitators and a resource" (p. 23). Readers will have their own definitions of student centered learning and of literacy and literacies. It is our purpose to encourage reflection on the issues raised, which we hope will lead to further reading, research and ongoing dialogue.

Janet Isserlis

Learner-centered Practice *A View from in here*

The descriptor, learner centered, before practice in writing about the Literacy/ESL Program at the International Institute of R.I., evokes inquiries from administrators and teachers. They question how that differs from any other practice. Is not the purpose of all educational programs to address the needs of learners?

From my experiences as an educator in various adult education programs, my responses explore differences between the Literacy/ESL Program at IIRI, which moves toward a more learner centered focus, and programs that focus elsewhere. Some dis-

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[9] A tutor is a teacher/facilitator in the UK, and the term does not have the connotation of 'volunteer tutor' that it has in the US. Volunteer tutors in the UK are referred to as volunteers.

tinguishing aspects of a learner centered program include origin, manner of initially screening participants and staff, pedagogy, evaluative measures, and concerns for the relationships and interrelationships of participants. Additionally, overall costs and benefits to learners and teachers lend significance to the comparison. Some aspects of the learner centered focus of the IIRI program are described in sections of this document pertaining to pedagogy, evaluation and collaboration. Other aspects – origin, screening, costs and benefits – are described in the following account.

The origin of the learner centered program differs from that of programs which originate from a need perceived by someone other than the learners. In the latter, instead of responding to learners' needs, a request for a proposal comes from a funding source. An institution or agency responds with a proposal to develop a particular skill, raise standardized test scores, bolster the workforce, improve an existing service or introduce a new initiative. Often designers envision no particular individuals in their programs; rather, they intend to accomplish desirable outcomes in a targeted population. Program precedes recruitment. Goals and objectives come from the administrators, funders, instructors, or other intended beneficiaries of the education rendered (employers, service providers, etc,). The content of the program most often is determined by examination of the anticipated evaluative measures to be employed. Successful completion of the program corresponds to fulfilling the expectations and desired goals of the incipient planners or to learners' proficiency in pre-determined competencies.

In contrast, the Literacy/ESL program at IIRI enlisted an approach that was different from the outset. The program responded to the stated needs of learners and their teachers/facilitators in the agency's English Language Center and addressed the inability of many learners to deal immediately with books and print, in general. Its concern was, therefore, with methodology to enable learners to interact with print in their lives. Considering those ESL learners to be representative of a much larger population with similar needs, the program sought, through its direct service (instruction to non native speakers of English), to develop replicable models of effective education in literacy in the classroom as well as in other settings where prospective learners access literacy.

The screening process within the program proceeded differently, also. It did not act as a filter to reject some applicants

and select others, but as an instrument to initiate an ongoing process of assessment with its participants. A staff member, at an initial interview or intake session, assessed an individual's ability to interact with print as a determinant for appropriateness to the program. S/he invited each prospective learner to demonstrate, through some initial screening activities, his/her familiarity or unfamiliarity with print. If the interviewee easily read and also wrote the personal information elicited on a simple registration form, the interviewer invited her/him to continue to process other pertinent information with the interviewer. Several other tasks associated with literacy were presented to him/her for completion, e.g. recognition of words in context, labelling of photos of realia, the opportunity to describe a photo, read and write a paragraph. The interviewer pursued answers about learners' previous education, current supports for education in literacy, and specific personal goals in education and literacy.

Sometimes, if the interviewee needed bilingual assistance, an interpreter, provided by the interviewer, elicited additional information. Some learners brought their own interpreter -- often a family member -- to accompany them in the intake process.

Learners, subsequently placed in classes not exceeding 12 in number, were grouped generally by some similarities of their oral abilities in English and of the degree of their previous exposure to print. The focus of the content of each class came from the learners' articulated goals and interests. When the learner was not conscious of or did not state personal goals, the interactions among class participants and from conferencing with the facilitator often brought new realizations of personal needs and goals to consciousness. In other instances, learners with very specific or limited goals found those goals expanding through their involvement with peers and through exposure to wider contexts.

Teachers' observations of and interactions with learners in class sessions provided the basis for their ongoing evaluation of individual learners. After each session teachers recorded observable literacy behaviors and listed learning strategies students used in class. This documentation supplied information about learners' progress which was compiled later in evaluation grids. (Samples of the grid appear in the section on evaluation).

Collaborative efforts among students and between teachers and students moved the curriculum. Teachers elicited topics of

interest to the group and facilitated interactive strategies around the topics as well as decisions about materials to be used. Sometimes it was advantageous for teachers to encourage students to generate materials. At other times, teachers or students chose appropriate existing materials. The section on praxis in this document demonstrates further some pedagogical aspects of a learner centered approach, supplying an overview of Rooms 1 and 6 along with profiles of particular learners.

Costs and benefits

The costs and benefits to a program of focussing primarily on learners' needs are issues that demanded the ongoing reflection and attention of staff. There were repeated considerations among staff about how to report and demonstrate clearly for funders and other practitioners what teachers perceived as significant learner gains. Employing a growth model and a holistic approach, one in which discrete gains were embedded in practice, required much effort. Ascertaining favorable outcomes and reporting them unambiguously was crucial to securing ongoing program support. We created a grid on which to record the evaluation data we collected in our teacher research.

Programs that attend primarily to learners' articulated needs risk conflict with decision makers in sponsoring and funding institutions, who themselves have previously determined the priority needs of learners. Although many organizations claim to support liberatory approaches to education (efforts that attempt to free people from enslavement to concerns that do not qualitatively improve their lives), far fewer groups fund efforts that enable participants to determine the changes that would, in fact, qualitatively improve their lives. The "I know what they need" or "Let's fix what is broken" attitude keeps many programs locked in deficit models, concentrating on learners' weaknesses instead of strengths.

For the Literacy/ESL Program the challenges of learner centered practice outweighed the costs. Programs and personnel focussing on the authentic needs of learners and pursuing the requisite ancillary support services inevitably collaborate with others. We confronted barriers to literacy identified in the needs assessment in order to increase access to literacy. Collaborations with other agencies and individuals made that possible -- accessing their space, sharing child care resources. Especially, we witnessed the personal growth and satisfaction of learners owning their own strategies for interacting with print, as a result of

the collaborative pedagogy.

Practitioners sometimes know experientially, and sometimes intuitively answers to which empirical researchers lay claim. The Literacy/ESL Program engaged teachers in practitioner centered educational research to support this realization and to draw on this pool of knowledge. As did each part of the program, the professional development of staff focussed on the learners themselves and educators' reflections and collaborations around practice with them.

Fran Filipek Collignon

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action research

During the course of our work with the literacy program, we were drawn to what has come to be known as action research. The section below provides an overview of action research and also delineates a piece of the research we undertook with the development of our evaluation grid.[1]

Action research: definitions

Action research is a process by which to formalize inquiry into an aspect of practice -- a specific question to explore, which then often enough generates additional questions, which generate additional reflection, action, evaluation. It is a recursive and ongoing process.

> Action research refers to teacher-initiated investigation of teaching, as part of the process of gaining a new understanding of one's teaching and bringing about change in (and possible improvement of) teaching. Action research usually involves a cycle of self-observation or reflection, identification of an aspect of classroom behavior to be investigated, and selection of appropriate procedures to investigate and interpret behaviors.
> **Teacher Education Interest Section Newsletter, TESOL, 1989**

Nancy Martin states that "...generally teachers have been trained as doers of other people's direction... and have seldom seen themselves as initiators"[2]. Classroom inquiry allows teachers to initiate and investigate aspects of practice of interest to **them**. Understanding that there may be an aspect of practice that is troublesome, or of particular interest to the teacher, s/he (alone or with others -- perhaps from the larger community as well) can initiate ways in which to explore and discover more about the topic at hand, developing the metacognitive awareness which facilitates asking questions and seeking answers.

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1 This section has been adapted from an article by Janet Isserlis in *TESL Talk* , Vol. 20, No. 1, 1991.
2 Goswami and Stillman, (eds.). (1987). *Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change*. pp. 22-23.
3 Kemmis and McTaggart, (eds.) (1981). *The action research planner*, p. 5.

Kemmis and McTaggart speak of action research as collective investigation, with the intention of creating positive change in educational practice. It's ..."a form of **collective** self-reflective enquiry undertaken ... to improve the rationality and justice of ... social or educational practices, as well as [an] understanding of these practices and the situations in which [they] are carried out." [3]

Action research may be informal, but it demands rigor and attention to evidence and documentation. One needs a system or systems of documentation and recording of observations. Interpretive researchers contextualize their findings; these findings are no less valid because of their anecdotal nature, nor are they limited to anecdotal field notes, observation or reflection alone. Elicitation procedures, such as questionnaires and surveys, may comprise a piece of the 'action' phase in which information will be sought and then reflected upon in order to make and observe changes, reflect upon them, etc. Relevant paper realia (notices, documents, charts and graphs) may also contribute to the final triangulation, the putting together and analyzing of input.

Making sense of things is the rationale behind participant observation and encompasses the (self) reflection which is an important component of action research. An outside researcher may participate in classroom based research. Colleagues may be engaged in collaboration on an action research project; or the teacher/researcher can choose to work autonomously, although autonomy need not preclude collaboration, dialog, and sharing of findings. The practitioner/researcher has the ability to reflect upon practice and to inquire into it. A practitioner's sense of the ongoing need for development and growth coincides with the learning s/he seeks through action research. It is a processive, specific micro examination into a learning/teaching sphere with the intention of changing or improving a given aspect of practice and praxis.

Action research: how to

Although there are no absolute rules about proceeding with an action research investigation, there are four broad working methods which may be useful in organizing thoughts and input. In undertaking an action research endeavor, one may

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4 Wallerstein. (1983). *Langauge and culture in conflict: Problem-posing in the ESL classroom.*

wish to work:
-- in partnership with a researcher;
-- through journals (self with a co-researcher or support colleague);
-- through documentation (of classes, student writing, lesson plans, etc.);
-- by taping: audio/video (observation, transcription, analysis).

These strands facilitate reflecting upon practice. There may be a specific issue, such as developing authentic means of generating conversation in English, or some larger question being explored -- why does one group of learners do 'x' when another does 'y' under the same given set of circumstances? Learning how to identify, to attend to and to understand such givens, and to observe the change(s) incurred by the presence or absence of different variables feeds back into the investigation. To facilitate this learning, we need to sharpen our observational skills. We need to learn to look and listen well.

A number of visual representations of the research process have been developed by numerous people. These figures all revolve around various combinations of **planning, action, observation,** and **reflection,** and essentially serve to guide the practitioner in framing her inquiry in some organized or linear way. Linearity, however, is not a key feature of action research. It spirals and becomes recursive. While working through the sequence (**plan/act/observe/reflect**), one or more of the models listed above may be used as a means of working through the research process.

The overall process described as action research resembles Nina Wallerstein's explanation of a problem-posing approach[4]. Wallerstein suggests that a teacher immerse herself in the goings on of learners' neighborhoods and communities, in much the same way an ethnographer would engage herself in discovering the macro (background, larger surrounding) issues of a community under study. Although not explicitly stated as research, per se, the problem posing approach relies extensively on attentive and intensive listening and observation on the part of the facilitator in order to identify issues of importance to learners. Sara Smith speaks of the classroom in which learners' values are allowed "to emerge through their speech and their writing. Access to information about students' value systems enable[s] the teacher to interpret student interaction and engagement as

well as to form hypotheses about lack of engagement"[5].

Problem-posing serves as a means of sustaining ongoing dialog between and among facilitators and learners. Action research takes this process one step further in its reflection of not only content and curriculum, but also of the ways in which they are implemented. Problem posing in the classroom unearths and explicates student needs. Action research allows the practitioner to reflect upon ways in which these needs are met. In the two instances assessment is ongoing, in terms of what students need and want to learn, as well as in terms of their abilities and of the progress they make.

Ongoing listening and observation are also part of the business of learning and teaching, and for this reason it is felt that action research is simply an explication and documentation of good practice. What follows are possible frameworks for encoding that practice.

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1. The statement of a problem
2. The imagination of a solution
3. The implementation of a solution
4. The evaluation of the solution
5. The modification of practice in the light of the evaluation.

These five steps can also be framed within the broad headings of planning, action, observation and reflection.[6]

planning

Barrett and Whitehead list six critical questions for starting an action research investigation:

1. What is your concern?
2. Why are you concerned?
3. What do you think you could do about it?
4. What kind of 'evidence' could you collect to help you make some judgement about what is happening?
5. How would you collect such 'evidence'?
6. How would you check that your judgement about what has happened is reasonably fair and accurate? [7]

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[5] Smith, (1989). *Looking within: Engagement in literacy in an adult ESL classroom*, unpublished paper, p. 64.

[6] Forrest, cited in McNiff (1988). *Action research: Principles and practice*, pp. 58-59.

[7] qtd. in McNiff, p. 57.

Although these questions are very useful in framing an investigation, the use of the words 'problems' and 'concern' could be misleading in that they can carry a negative connotation. They could be replaced by 'interest' or 'question' to impart a more positive and open tone to the inquiry; research can be initiated into what's working as well as into what isn't.

Essentially, the planning phase is the period of time in which the issue, question or problem to be studied is identified and strategies for investigation are developed.

An example: Teachers in the literacy program wanted to find a way to track learner progress. We weren't happy with standard evaluative forms or procedures. We liked the general idea of the Cambridge Community Learning Center (1986) and of Good and Holmes (1982) which used grids and checklists to find learners' strengths and goals: however, these schemes didn't really fit our needs. Unsure of quite what we were looking for, we decided to document each class we taught. Our planning at this point was relatively open ended; we weren't sure of the form our evaluation tool would take. We decided that in writing up every class, we might be able to find patterns of behavior that would indicate in some observable way learners' progress and our perceptions of that progress.

action
Having decided during the planning phase what to investigate and ways in which to conduct the investigation, the teacher/researcher then implements those activities.

example: We began the action phase by writing a narrative account of each class and included whatever worksheet, or other forms of writing were used or generated during the class. When we started this process we had no idea that we were beginning an action research project; at best, when asked, we said we were doing 'small 'r' research'. We noted what was discussed or read during the class (as well as what might have been overlooked or not discussed) and also how much and with whom learners interacted, e.g., from whom did they seek help? Who was willing to help other students? Who wanted to go to the blackboard to write? Who asked questions? Who translated the facilitator's instructions to his/her co-learners? Observations

gleaned from questions such as those above came to form the narrative we would write each night after class.

As we became more experienced in observing our classes, we wrote less about topics and activities and more about individual learner activity. Although learners were not involved explicitly in this written reflection in any ongoing way (explicit learner involvement in the process began later, and very gradually), their progress was pointed out to them by their teachers as their dialog journal entries grew longer, or as they went to the blackboard more frequently, read passages independently or even remarked to each other on the progress they had made.

observation

Having implemented the action, the teacher/researcher observes subsequent change and/or input of new information, resultant interaction, etc.

example: After several weeks of documenting classes, we began to see patterns emerging in learners' behavior. In conferring verbally among ourselves, as well as through interacting sporadically in dialog journals, we were able to begin to process the information we were obtaining through the documentation. Additionally, we started videotaping classes. The tapes focused almost entirely on the learners; Fran or I would be heard but seldom seen. Most commonly a class watched a tape immediately after it was made. One class who were discouraged by what they felt was slow progress were shown a videotape made three months earlier. Watching themselves at a less fluent stage helped them recognize the progress they had made.

Meanwhile, during the first few months of documenting and taping, we began to speculate about why one learner might do things one way, and another would take a different approach altogether. We noticed that while some people were consistently reticent to approach the blackboard, others would be very willing to do so. We saw who the students turned to for help among themselves, who began to ask for assistance, and who would ask for "only one person" to help him spell when he went to the board.

One such learner was Arturo. He was initially unable to write anything that he didn't copy carefully from the board, with the

exception of his name and address. Although he would follow along with a classmate when reading other material, he expressed interest in learning the alphabet and in little else. After a lengthy hiatus from class, during which he was working with a home tutor, he returned to us and knew the alphabet. When I would ask someone to write the date on the board, Arturo would go and write the alphabet in both upper and lower case and the date. Later he would volunteer to go to the board to write (requesting assistance) and to read. In addition to these more visible changes, he read his entries in his dialog journal with less dependence on me or on another learner and constantly sought clarification and correction of specific letters and words. He began to access environmental print (looking for the name of the month on the calendar on the wall; looking at a piece of paper in front of him to find a word he knew to be there). Arturo was exhibiting literate behavior. He asked for a specific literacy skill – to learn the alphabet. Having participated in a community of learners who created a literate environment every day they were together, he had made important strides. How could we write that down and report on it?

reflection

What has been happening? What qualitative changes in behavior or action have occurred? What has been/is being learned? What needs to be refined? What new questions have arisen? The process of reflection spirals back to a revised phase of planning; action, observation and reflection follow.

example: As pages of documentation piled up, we found we needed a way in which to cull particular pieces of information about learners from those accounts. We began to look at the various components of student interaction and behavior within the classroom. Some aspects of learners' behavior indicated cognitive development. (For example, Arturo was gaining a sense of sound/ symbol correspondences.) We soon found that we needed to be able to see student progress over several months on one page. A second cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting enabled us to make the needed development of and refinements to the grid. The grid serves as a guide to facilitators in that its component pieces inform them and their learners of the multiple aspects of progress made with literacy learning. Although teachers may prefer writing a paragraph, the headings used in the grid may help them to reflect more carefully or

EVALUATION GRID Student's name R

	Intake Interview Feb 29/88	6 month Evaluation	1 year Evaluation	Recommend-ation re: ongoing placement Oct 2/89
Oral Fluency	can make himself understood; been in country since 1966	absent from Jul - Nov. Little change		Called in August. Was out of country from Feb. – June.89 -
Aural Com-prehension	can understand most English spoken in observable context	as before/ fossilization	as before	will be placed in same class if he returns
Interactive behaviour	seems to like people; likes sharing his ideas and opinions	As R came to know people, he would respond to them very warmly. If he didn't feel close to people, he'd ignore them / not learn their names		
Cognitive Skills	no sound / symbol recognition; very little retention of words he's been shown.	seemed to make little visible progress during this period	returned with firm grasp of alphabet in English; has begun retaining some sight words and volunteering for writing tasks; beginning to share and derive meaning from print	
Meta-cognitive awareness	knows he wants to learn to read/write; on third day asked for work with alphabet	always heads notebook page with title "Writing"; asks for certain kinds of assistance	heads pages with "Writing" + date + alphabet and names of months he knows; asks for some assistance from teacher and students	
Literacy Goals	unclear		to read: says "reading is very important to read bills"	
Employ ment goals	unclear ; vision and other problems might preclude serious employment goals	never explicitly mentioned: seems that R can't really work		
Health	see above	vision problems continue; no longer able to drive; could not come to school; given home tutoring		

(From TESL Talk, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1991)

differently upon ways in which to observe and document learners' progress in a holistic manner.

As we worked more with the grid and concurrently learned more about what we were looking for, we became more attentive to observable and less evident behaviors and subsequently became more astute in writing up classes. Although indirectly perceived, this writing process effected a change in teaching practice. As we became more aware of ways in which to observe and document students' learning strategies, our teaching practice changed accordingly in order to respond to those strategies. Hence, the four part process spiraled and continued in a very recursive manner.

Another consequence of this documentation process came about through inservice collaboration with other teachers with whom we worked. One teacher, confounded by why some of her students actively participated in classroom discussions while others were silent, decided to document her own classes for a six week period. During that time she was able to locate patterns of behavior that emerged in her descriptions of each class. She took note of specific pieces of lessons that students had liked, activities to which they had responded especially well, who had interacted with whom, etc. In writing up each class, she was able to see specific pieces of the classes that had eluded her when she had considered the classes in a more general, less reflective manner. She could understand component pieces of the class that she'd overlooked when she'd reviewed its progress whole cloth.

She also found that her planning was subsequently facilitated by this process of writing and reflecting; often during the actual documentation process ideas for continuing, expanding or building upon the previous class came to light. Although making sense of data in an action research study can become unwieldy and overwhelming (particularly if one's project grows too quickly or one gathers more input than one can immediately handle), the process of unraveling -- through reflection, writing and dialog -- enables the teacher/researcher to sort through, juxtapose and consider various pieces of input in ways that are not as evident as they would be in reviewing a class's progress (or whatever is being studied) in its entirety.

Another aspect of reflection entails rereading, and rethinking. Articles in files, notes from conferences, books read last year gain new meaning with each rereading. How do you respond to that

information now? What changes can you see in your own understanding? How do you see these changes? What new perspectives do you bring to each reading and rereading? This kind of reflection is ongoing and need not necessarily be tied to a specific research inquiry.

The writing process, which may comprise much of the research (as in the case of our documentation of classes), also provides a large piece of learning and reflection. In writing and describing his/her observations, and especially in writing reports for others to read about these observations, the practitioner learns and relearns what it is that comprises the culture of his/her classroom/practice/school. The process of writing itself becomes a vehicle for learning. In reflecting upon what one is doing, observing, and evaluating, the process of articulating these events necessarily forces the writer to make her/his implicit assumptions explicit; s/he must clarify and explicate the ordinary in writing. In naming the ordinary, in situating the everyday in a social and connected context, the teacher/ researcher must make his/her statements clear and must, in fact, decontextualize these statements through the medium of words on paper, in order to convey what is deeply contextualized.

now what?

Having enumerated ways in which to go about an action research study, what does the teacher/ researcher actually set out to do? Van Lier cites Cohen and Manion's definition of action research as "small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effect of such intervention" [8] . McNiff, focusing entirely on action research, cautions the practitioner/researcher to "start small". Although the final project might become quite extended, the course of the research develops sequentially; one question grows from and/or into another. "[It] is sequential and cumulative. Each step will act as a springboard to the next." (p. 67). Other valuable, and perhaps self evident, pieces of advice include the following admonitions; [9]

- plan carefully, and set up a realistic time scale;
- involve others and keep them informed;
- arrange for feedback;
- organize a writing schedule.

[8] van Lier. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner*, p. 67.
[9] McNiff, pp. 67-71.

An educational setting is comprised of co-learners. Their activities and interactions may proceed smoothly or they may not. Learning how and why educational events occur as they do forms the basis of the research. You may want to see if gender grouping affects learning in your class, or if older learners prefer working with younger learners, or if new readers prefer reading to each other or being read to by other learners or by the teacher. Whatever it is you decide to pursue, you have the capability of organizing your questions, reflecting upon their answers, evaluating changes you may make and integrating your learning into your teaching. You may choose a case study approach; focussing on one learner and his/her interactions with others in order to see how/what/if his or her actions represent, impact upon or change those of others. You may follow two learners to compare and contrast learning styles, taking into account previous education, current educational goals, age, gender, employment status, ethnicity, family situation, etc.

The research process need not necessarily be removed from the classroom or added to the facilitator's workload. It can be incorporated into classroom activity. Learners can and often should be included in the research process. Ethnography can be done by students, interviewing each other, learning about and discussing their communities and the people in them, gathering oral histories, etc. As learners become more explicitly aware of their own learning on a metacognitive level, their interest in action research may grow as well.

The issue of learner involvement in research is not an altogether simple one. British learners have complained of the same kind of marginalization experienced by practitioners who feel patronized and used by university researchers[10]. The research agenda cannot be imposed upon learners. Their permission is necessary if teacher/practitioners' work is to be published or disseminated and student writing samples, video or still photo images are to be used. Beyond extending that permission, students' interest in participating in the action research project itself may vary; their needs and interests must be acknowledged and respected.

Conclusion

As we work from learners' strengths, we must also work from

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[10] Doing Research: Special Issue. (1989). *Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Bulletin* , No. 9, p. 9.

our own. What do we already know? What are our biases? How can we work from what we know or suspect and seek confirmation or disconfirmation in order to implement positive change in our classrooms? Action research guides us in quantifying and explicating a metacognitive awareness of practice. This occurs through observation, attentiveness, discussion with colleagues. The teacher as participant observer has an intuitive awareness of the macro issues surrounding his or her practice, but may need to find ways in which to make the intuitive explicit; to make the ordinary known. S/he needs to explicate what is taken for granted. Simply stated, we need to look around us, ask ourselves questions and evaluate our answers. Action research is aptly named. We have to act, think, observe, reflect and do.

The emergence of action research as an entity helped to focus and frame ongoing work within the Literacy/ESL Program. Giving action research the credibility and respectability that goes along with publication and dissemination opens doors to other practitioner/researchers from whom a great deal can be learned. Interestingly, practitioners in a variety of settings have been engaged in action research under various guises, and the legitimation of these endeavors can only serve to facilitate more research and more learning. Donald Freeman's emphasis on teacher education (as opposed to training)[11] and the increasingly beneficial aspects of collaborative research models have given rise to the importance of and need for the practitioner's voice to be included in and among those of researchers, anthropologists, linguists, ethnographers and other 'expert' specialists. Practitioners, gaining new ways to view their work and to give voice to their learning, will further the cause of demystifying research, making it their own, and sharing the benefits of these discoveries with their learners.

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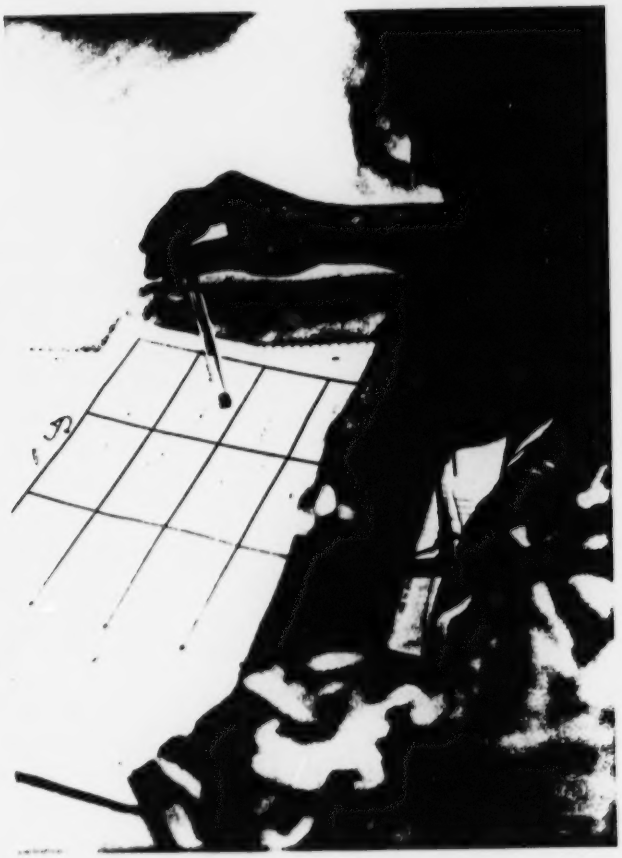

Fran	Guatemala
Maria	Laos
Keo	Cambodia
Dabeyba	Laos
Khorn	Laos
Lillian	United States
Bounpheng	Guatemala
Yoeum	El Salvador
Marta	Laos
Vang Pao	Dominican Republic
Tou	Cambodia

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praxis

Classes in adult ESL literacy were held throughout the three years of the Literacy/ESL Program at IIRI. During the first three months of the program (February - April '88), approximately 15 learners studied from 5 to 7 PM, four nights a week in Room 6, designated the Literacy Center at IIRI. The program coordinator and one teacher shared the responsibilities of facilitating the class. In May '88, with the expansion of staff and increase of learners, the initial class was divided into two classes (referred to as Room 1 and Room 6 in the following text) according to the classroom facilitators' determinations of the learners' oral fluencies in English and familiarity with print. Each class had no more than 12 learners and now had its own teacher, with another teacher hired to replace the coordinator as the facilitator of a class. Although participants came and went during the three years, and supplementary staff assisted with the classes to relieve the demands of increasing duties of the two teachers (Fran and Janet), class format, size and schedule remained relatively the same throughout the duration of the Literacy/ESL Program.

The descriptions of Room 1 and Room 6, presented through the lens of practitioners' action research, suggest the significance of the social context for education in literacy. Our documentation traces the practice in which participants (learners and teachers) engaged together in education in literacy. Case study research tracked the progress of selected learners, documenting observable literacy behaviors, interactive strategies used to access print, and changing needs and goals.

The Room 1 class met from 5 to 7 PM four nights a week from May 9, 1988 through the last week of January, 1991. I taught the classes each evening until December of 1989, after which time I began to facilitate the classes on two of the four evenings, with other facilitators (2 men and 1 woman) at various times teaching the other two nights of the week. (This same pattern occurred in Room 6 as well). My description of Room 1 follows.

Francine Filipek Collignon

Room 1: the facilitator's assumptions

My own assumptions about literacy, education, and the diversity of needs among adult learners influenced my choices throughout the program. These underlying assumptions moved my efforts towards a more learner centered literacy practice with non native speakers of English:

Literacy is a process, and the meaning of the term depends on each adult's perception of what is required by the roles s/he assumes.

In the Literacy/ESL Program at IIRI, education in literacy describes efforts around interacting with print, focussing on progress in reading and writing English as a Second Language.

A variety of barriers (institutional, situational, affective, and educational, among others) impedes access to literacy.

Service providers' awarenesses of and attention to issues around barriers to literacy can increase learners' access to education in literacy.

Learners' current needs and goals in literacy must determine the focus of teaching practice.

Sociocultural factors (e.g. ethnicity, educational background, socioeconomic strata, age, gender) of teachers/facilitators/learners affect practice.

Everybody knows something about literacy. Nobody knows everything about literacy.

Collaborative frameworks for practice, with ongoing dialog within the collaborations, enhance practice.

Professional development that addresses articulated needs rather than assumed needs of practitioners improves practice.

Worthwhile professional development engages rather than obligates staff.

New understandings of the implications of these assumptions continued to emerge from my interactions with learners. These understandings directed my attempts to introduce or to increase access to print with the learners in Room 1. They provide a

foundation for my commitment to professional development through ongoing action research around models for collaborative pedagogy.

Overview of Room 1

Describing the learners I met in Room 1, throughout the course of the Literacy/ESL Program, calls for my reflection on a variety of issues. They range from the pedagogical considerations I faced as an educator in addressing open entry, multilevel ability classes to the range of responses necessary for supporting participants of diverse ages, ethnicities and educational backgrounds. The composition of this class over the duration of the program continually changed because of an open entry policy, although class size never exceeded the twelve student capacity previously designated in the program design. Because the literacy staff attempted to remain learner centered, the arrival time and particular needs of each new participant substantially affected the entire class. Integration of new learners and ongoing attention to their progress in literacy as individuals occurred in the context of peer interaction.

The introduction of new members to a class proceeded through current learners initiating conversation with a newly arrived learner at the first class session s/he attended. A scribe from within the group would record on newsprint or the blackboard the new learner's responses to questions from his/her peers. Language experience approach, implemented by eliciting the above mentioned information from a learner, recorded dialogs, problem-posing exercises, and peer assisted reading and writing, enabled the learners not only to interact with print, but to become a community of learners in the process. This community gradually evolved and then sometimes abruptly changed its manner of interacting, its focus on particular content and its preference of strategies for learning, as the gender, ethnicity, age and educational levels of its learners varied.

The following narrative refers to learners in the context of the rest of the group and demonstrates how periodic changes in the composition of the class created shifts in the focus of learning content and group processes. It also elaborates on factors beyond the specifically educational concerns that preoccupy learners and, consequently, affect attendance and engagement of learners, e.g. situational considerations like season and weather, neighborhood safety, transportation and child care.

Three important junctures within the first year of the program formed important backdrops against which to view changes in the class and the adjustments they required. The composition of the class changed in terms of gender distribution, ability levels and educational goals during the first three months, the next six months and then in the following three months. These changes necessitated refocussing content and educational strategies in class: my manner of eliciting language experience stories, procedures with dialog journals, and interactive tasks chosen to address learners' needs. How print dense and how lengthy language experience stories were depended on the new participants' abilities to enter into the activities. What kind of journal entries were expected also depended on the productive skills of newcomers to the class.

These awarenesses of learners' diverse abilities also demanded my structuring recursive steps in order to repeat material for new learners while challenging more advanced students in the same classroom. Providing the more experienced learner with opportunities to facilitate a lesson orally, to record the language experience on newsprint for others or to direct small group or individual reading and writing became successful strategies. Co-teaching and co-learning among multilevel students became an effective way to facilitate interaction with print in Room 1.

In order to acknowledge the dialogic nature of all learning, I brought learners into consensus during decision making about the content of class sessions. Considering their minimal oral fluency and aural comprehension, I depended on bilingual assistance from other learners in communicating with some of their peers lacking previous ESL experience. This bilingual aid fostered communication between some learners and myself; lack of it created stress for others. In one case, a woman who spoke only Chinese terminated from the program because no ongoing bilingual assistance was available during class time.

The participative model for the class facilitated my discovery of generative words and themes. At any given time, the distribution of learners across age, gender, ethnicity, employment, etc., varied and, therefore, so did the focus of the language.

My documentation, recorded after each class session I taught during the first three months of the program, underscored apparent affective barriers. Some learners' low self esteem, fear of

failure, and reticence with students of other ethnicities seemed to prevent them from participating in class as freely as they would later on in the process. Initially they were slow to recount in class events of cultural significance in their own countries of origin. For example, they needed much prodding to describe the Cambodian wedding rituals they attended. Additionally, they seemed unwilling to risk asking questions of other participants (from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Cambodia and Ghana) about their preferences in food and entertainment. A sole male participant often acted in class as a spokesman for the female students from his homeland of Cambodia. Communication among all of the learners and their responses to the teacher's questions or attempts to initiate dialog were guarded and patterned, rather than spontaneous.

Over the course of the next six months of classes together, observable differences developed in the students' interactions with each other and around print. The only male student requested a move from the Room 1 class. He recognized that the content of the class sessions was too easy and went to Room 6. With his departure, one woman voiced her relief that the students could now learn some "body" words they needed for speaking to the doctor. The class composition, now "only women", evolved into something of a support group.

In this changed context, aches and pains became the focus of discussions, as did the complaints of and about children of the learners. The generative themes of "family" and "home" emerged across ethnic lines. Women began to access each other's experiences pertaining to information on the location of health centers, comparison of medicines and safety issues in the neighborhood. Those women with more oral fluency and aural comprehension in English than others struggled to mediate conversations that left out those with minimal fluency. The learner centered focus of the class necessitated regular departures from a more rigid adherence to speaking only English -- a requisite of many ESL classes. Students frequently assisted each other in their first languages (sometimes orally, at other times by going to the blackboard to supply the word that would unlock meaning for another participant).

Students began to talk more about their families. Counting "how many children?" and " "how many grandchildren?" became one of the sources of bonding across cultural and linguistic barriers, in the same way as learning students' and their families' names had forged new relationships across cultures with

the arrival of each new member of the class. When learners began to bring in photographs of their families, I introduced them to the use of photo albums with self adhesive pages. Photos inserted in the pages provided a bridge for them between visual images used as conversation starters and the eventual use of dialog journals. For example, labelling family pictures and sometimes expanding the label to a few sentences or a paragraph in the album became an easy introduction to reading and writing for new meaning. Exchanging albums with one another extended the reading lesson.

Grids, filled in with learners' favorite meats and vegetables, became much anticipated materials. Women discovered similarities and comfortably dealt with differences in their lifestyles. Their cooperative learning and interaction resulted in very predictable and comfortable routines for learning language, (or what Janet calls recurring events).

In many class sessions a family picture, a grid, a map, an object and sometimes even a copy of the text of a language experience story initially codified meanings that would be explored further in the remainder of that and other class sessions. A half hour long activity around such a "code" (as Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator, refers to these carriers of meaning) often led into some labelling, listing, or copying exercise that lasted another half hour. After a ten minute break, vital for social contact with the literacy learners from the other class meeting at the same time, people enjoyed helping each other begin to read and write.

Peer assistance in reading the Room 6 News (generated weekly from the other 5 o'clock literacy class), responding to their own dialog journals or practicing some other writing tasks occurred regularly. Partnering for tasks with a student beside oneself nurtured bonding among the students, enabling a lively, unselfconscious exchange. Gender probably also affected communication. Women's experiences seemed alike enough for them to make immediate connections and experience support.

After three months with only women in the class, three new male students registered. Their arrival in class necessitated some review and reinforcement of what had happened previously. Sometimes their "beginner" status necessitated asking another student to become "teacher" during the second half of the class session. Issues that the men articulated in language experience were new to class discussion: drugs, alcohol, employment issues. Issues that the women had previously liked to

commiserate over, e.g. child care and personal hygiene, disappeared from discussion.

In the final months of the first year of the program, new "older" students (three of them in their fifties and sixties) came to Room 1 after other learners had progressed and moved from Room 1 to Room 6. The new participants depended for help in translating and sentence production almost entirely on learners from their countries of origin who were already in Room 1. Especially the two new learners from Southeast Asia, with no prior schooling, needed strategies already a part of the other participants' practice. These peer helpers previously had received assistance with the same material from other learners in Room 1 and, with these partnerships, had changed roles.

The addition of a male staff person to the existing class structure affected both class style and class content. Instead of having the same teacher on all four nights, students had to adjust to a new teacher on two evenings a week in addition to the two nights I continued to teach. There was no longer a "routine" to the classes. Learners expected to be paired for interactive strategies for reading and writing on the two nights when I taught and to be more engaged in oral drills, flashcards, etc., as a whole group for the entire two hours on those two nights of the week when the other teacher taught. The model for the class, therefore, evolved according to the changing composition of learners and to teachers' perspectives on their needs.

Learners progressed in various aspects of their education in literacy at different rates. Their initial adjustments to a new teacher and subsequent responses to other teachers and styles of classroom presentation and management offered them opportunities to use their developing ESL literacies. Learners continued to attend class regularly despite apparent disruptions in the continuity of an instructional approach.

Situational needs such as those around health, child care, job responsibilities and transportation issues, rather than dissatisfaction with literacy, accounted for absences according to learners. Women in the class who did not drive or own a car often walked to class or took the bus. In the months when it was dark outside by 5 PM, their attendance became very sporadic. They often talked about their families' concerns about their health and safety on the way to and from school. The winter season, especially, meant colds for students and their families. In anecdotal information from the class documentation, mention

was made during the second winter of the program of six different individuals temporarily dropping out of class because of transportation.

Some participants in the class constantly juggled child care responsibilities with their efforts to study. One woman, in particular, had to decide on a daily basis whether to leave the oldest of her twelve children in charge of her younger ones while she came to class. For other learners, work presented the obstacle. Some were obliged to work overtime in certain seasons of the year. Others felt compelled to take overtime whenever it was offered, because of their financial obligations.

Beyond the considerations relating to absenteeism, some information about the social dimensions of adult ESL literacy was available from observable behaviors in the interactive framework of the Room 1 literacy class. I believe that social factors often determined who stayed and who progressed in the Literacy/ESL Program. After analyzing and reviewing intake forms, attendance reports, and recorded reasons for termination from the program, I realized that the data reflected learners' perceptions about the importance of social contexts for learning. Together with teacher documentation from each class, these records pointed to the importance of nurturing interrelationships that challenge and support participants.

Most learners who came for intake interviews and visits to class in the Literacy/ESL Program remained for several months. They expressed relief that they could move at their own pace. Using interactive strategies (involving learners as tutors to one another, having volunteers in the classroom, forming partnerships for tasks and giving bilingual help to one another) created a community of learners, rather than a group of individual learners each struggling alone.

The reasons specific learners left the class contrast with the supports to learning cited by learners who stayed. A woman from China remained for a few weeks. She was the only participant in the program at that time who spoke Cantonese as her first language. When she left the program her daughter reported her mother's dismay that no one gave her bilingual assistance during class time. A woman from the Near East also came to only one session. Her level of ESL literacy made her appropriate for class; however, her expectations of classroom instruction were not met. She found the class "not serious enough". In her perspective, the learners were altogether too

relaxed to be productive. An elderly husband and wife from Laos came to class for a couple of months. The husband enjoyed the class, but did not want to come daily due to other interests. His wife could not keep up with the pace of the class unless she had the continuity of regular attendance. Because her husband drove her to class, she could not continue to attend if he did not. A very young woman (19 years old) from the Dominican Republic came to class. She progressed well while a volunteer from a local high school partnered with her twice a week as an in class tutor. When that peer attention fell off, so did her attendance. Three learners terminated, having found other sites for class nearer to home and with adequate social support (one in a Cambodian women's support group, two others together in a community center near their public housing project).

Other learners arrived with their own support systems. Two Hmong men studied together after work each night. A student brought a volunteer committed to helping him for a couple of months. Four women were referred to the Literacy/ESL Program as part of their pre-employment plan from a public assistance program, Pathways for Independence. Their similar socioeconomic status bonded them. In class they shared language experience stories about the worries of caring for large families with meager resources. In reflecting back on who came, who stayed, and who progressed in program classes, I am convinced that people's interrelationships were significant in supporting their language goals.

Some patterns of interaction and communication pertaining to strategies around print were regularly observable in Room 1 throughout the entire program. Bounpheng and Keo, two Laotian learners, supported each other. Bounpheng, a middle aged man, communicated orally and took directions easily. Keo, an elderly and minimally fluent man, was literate in his native language. He recorded in Lao what he understood and transliterated everything. They seemed happy working together. Bounpheng prided himself on being a good interpreter for Keo. In return, Keo assisted Bounpheng with reading and writing.

Dabeyba from Guatemala came to school alone for an intake interview, but arrived at class with her older sister Lillian. Since Dabeyba had no oral fluency in English, Lillian's assistance facilitated her speaking English. Lillian also needed help with writing in English what she comprehended orally and from print.

Yoeum, a grandmother from Cambodia, had come to class consistently for several years since the refugee program was in operation at the International Institute. She began to progress substantially when her literacy needs were addressed with the start up of the Literacy/ESL Program in February 1988. Her slow progress was steady. Sometimes she brought the granddaughter she babysat for to help her. When Khorn Chom, another Cambodian woman less orally fluent than Yoeum, came to class, Yoeum emerged as a confident helper for her.

Monica Martes did not belong in Room 1, but stationed herself there. Having presented herself as totally lost at an intake interview, she was placed in the beginning level. Soon after classes began in the fall of '90, she seemed ready even to progress to the English Language Center. It is difficult to determine why she presented herself as being less proficient that she actually was. When invited by facilitators to move to Room 6, along with two other class members, Monica begged not to go. She requested more time to learn beginning things. She spent her time helping others in class. She especially tried to help Maria Jimenez, who seemed offended and insulted, instead of grateful. Maria preferred to solo at her own pace. She liked to copy from the blackboard and from books. She selectively participated in class. Her attention span was short. She tuned out oral English, except conversations during the initial minutes of class. Maria taught herself Spanish as well as English literacy. She had devised her own way of encoding what she heard, including encoding Cambodian words that she sometimes used in class.

Cho Yang brought two relatives, newly arrived from Thailand refugee camps to class. One of them, Vong Yang, was a young man who seemed much too advanced for Room 1, but this threesome needed to stay together for different reasons. Vong Yang had impaired vision. Ti Yang, had very limited technical skills. Cho emerged as a good helper. His own progress was more evident to himself in comparison to the new arrivals. His self perception improved as a result of these interactions, as did his own confidence. Room 1 learners consistently demonstrated the benefits of social constructs; peers helped each other with a variety of tasks. In fact, a culminating activity in June of 1990 served as a sort of showcasing of the new skills and competencies of learners.

Literacy Volunteers of America, a national voluntary organization matching literacy learners and tutors, chose Room 1 as a filming site for their revised videotaped tutor training series.

The taping session was an optional class for the learners. They were invited to come to class and be filmed at one of two sessions. The first segment focussed on the use of the photo album journal among beginning literacy learners. The second segment required a group of learners to record and work with a language experience story together. I anticipated learners' resistance to the invitation and expected to abide by their wishes, rather than apply any persuasive pressure and thus violate my own principles of remaining learner centered in every aspect of practice. To my surprise, all of the learners signed up to participate. They arrived prepared to perform the tasks associated with their newly acquired literacy, some at an early session to work with albums and others at the later session to share stories.

Some incidents during the filming session, in which I was facilitating the group of learners, convinced me of the desirability of an opportunity for participants to demonstrate their skills to others.

Rany Dong, a Cambodian woman in the class, had brought a piece of writing to the session. She described having written it at home the night before and then rehearsing, reading it at work while she performed the monotonous tasks of her job in a jewelry factory. She said, "I think about school at work." Unexpected events arose from the deep motivation of individual learners and, I suspect, sometimes from the subtle pressure of peers (e.g. encouraging each other to be filmed) acting in consort to access print and put into use their advancing literacies.

Rather than a composite of a learner or a collection of vague generalities about Room 1, the following pages trace the participation of real learners in the entirety of the program. Close ups, highlighting Diana Vargas, Phuth Phong and Odilo Cabrera, demonstrate how a learner centered practice fits the diversity represented in case studies of their participation in the program. Diana, orally fluent in English and literate in her native language, Spanish, lacked the confidence and support from home to succeed without participating in a group. Her goals in literacy were broad, and her personality was outgoing and assertive in pursuing them. Phuth Phong, on the other hand, considerably older than Diana, had no previous education in Cambodia, her country of origin. She had no native language literacy and a very practical, limited educational goal of being able to access social services independently by handling appointments alone. She was shy and withdrawn. Odilo, a middle aged man from Guatemala, was employed, but lacked oral fluency in

Name Sriana Vargas

When do you speak English? none

When do you read English?

native language? can read Spanish

When do you write English? -

needs to speak En

native language? X

Why do you want to study?

important to understand
child speak En

Does anyone else in your household study? not

seems upset problems

Who speaks English in your family? my brother

5 sisters / one brother

my needs confused

Does anyone help you speak English? Who? -

Why do you want to study? maybe learn

Does anyone else in your household study? brother

school

Can you come to school four nights a week, 2 hours/night

NAME Phuth Phong

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number street apartment

Providence RI 02905
city state zip code

TELEPHONE 401-467-6914

I You Study ENGLISH

Date 9" 24 1990

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English, literacy in any language and previous education. He was referred to class from the Amnesty Program with a short term goal of attending enough classes to acquire an Amnesty certificate of satisfactory pursuit.

Seen through the lens of action research, the descriptions of these learners in an interactive setting magnify the links between effective educational practice and a holistic, learner centered approach to literacy.

Eridania Vargas attended classes at the International Institute four nights a week from May 1988 until April 1990. Her progress in ESL literacy reflects the importance of social contexts in addressing the affective as well as cognitive needs of second language literacy learners.

Diana, as Eridania preferred to be called, came to the Literacy/ESL Program in the spring of 1988 because she said her friends liked the International Institute's language programs. Shy and reticent, she began every communication in class with disclaimers about her own abilities. Often she said in class, as she had at her intake interview on May 2, 1988, "My head's confused." At that time, Diana had also reported that her need to communicate with her children motivated her to study.

Diana's oral skills seemed sufficient to express herself in English to teachers. Nevertheless, Diana usually refused to speak English publicly, considering her own speech poor in comparison to the bilingual accomplishments of her four school age children (11-17 years old). The following account situates Diana's gradual progress and her perceptions of it in the context of classes at IIRI.

Diana (40 years old at the time of her registration in the Literacy/ESL Program) benefited from interaction with other adult ESL learners struggling with their literacies. She began to connect her speech in English with her attempts to read and write. Her goals in literacy centered around the family rather than on employment or further education. She had articulated at her intake interview that communicating in English with her children was her primary goal. Subsequently, in class discussions, she added two additional goals: to communicate with doctors about her family's health needs and to improve her letter writing in both Spanish and English. She wanted to stay in

contact with relatives in New York and in her homeland, the Dominican Republic. (Diana was literate in Spanish, although she had completed only 4 years of elementary education in the Dominican Republic).

The participants in Diana's initial class, numbering approximately fifteen, were predominantly from Southeast Asian and Spanish speaking populations. During her first week they welcomed her and two other new students into the participatory activities of the class. During the second week of classes, due to increasing enrollment and staffing in the Literacy/ESL Program, the class was divided into two smaller sections according to differing abilities of the learners. The program coordinator and two teachers determined the placements, usually with minimal input from the learners. Upon hearing of the upcoming division, Diana made certain that she was in the beginning level.

A recursive movement characterized Diana's placement in classes at IIRI. Diana's back and forth decisions about class placement seemed to reflect her ambivalence about her own progress. She moved to the very beginning class from her initial larger class of the first week of school. Subsequently, when I invited Diana to progress to the next class, she did so reluctantly. She stayed a few months and then requested a return to the beginning class for support. A few months later, she requested a return back to the second level class, reportedly feeling better again about her progress. She remained there until after summer classes in 1989.

Prior to registration for classes in September 1989, Diana agreed to advance out of the Literacy/ESL Program into a beginning class of the English Language Center at the recommendation of Janet (who was then her teacher). I observed that she could negotiate the interaction with print expected in a beginning level ESL class. Diana's assent to this placement was provisional. She needed assurance of the option to return to the Literacy/ESL Program, if necessary. Diana's education and literacy needs seemed dependent on affective needs, i.e. having enough positive reinforcements in place to support the risk taking that nurtured her own language development.

Maribal Rodriguez, the facilitator of Diana's beginning level class of the English Language Center, described her progress on evaluative forms of her final year of class. Diana was now "able to write enough sentences to form a paragraph" and also "able to respond in her dialog journal, although Diana apologizes that

she does not know English and has made so many mistakes." Maribal also pointed out that, in spite of Diana's perceptions of herself as having a poor command of English, she did well in class. She had a great sense of humor, interacted comfortably and affectionately with students in the class and communicated easily with most of the students in the class who were Cambodian."

In June, during the few weeks of break time between the spring and summer session of 1990, upon our inquiries about Diana's recovery from recent surgery, she invited Maribal and me to visit her home. She anticipated her family's moving to Florida soon. Her relatives there were completing housing renovations to accommodate their arrival. Diana had not seen either of us since her surgery in April, although her husband, who attended class regularly in the Literacy/ESL Program, updated Maribal and the learners in her current class on Diana's recovery. In advance, I asked Diana if I could interview her during our visit. She consented.

At our visit, Diana reminisced about her classes. When I asked how she had come to the Literacy/ESL Program and who had encouraged her efforts, Diana said, "I go, me alone." Her husband and children reportedly were not involved at all in her decision to study, Diana reported -- in fact, quite the contrary. Her husband began to study English regularly only after she had begun class. She owned her personal commitment to advancing ESL/literacy.

At an initial home interview, early in the Literacy/ESL Program (1988), Diana had responded to several questions in ways that reflected her attitude toward English print. When I asked about print in her home, Diana pointed out a calendar in Spanish, the only visible print in the kitchen and living rooms where she welcomed me. When I asked if there were books in her house, she brought me to one son's bedroom and to two other bedrooms where Diana said three other children slept and did their homework. Print in English belonged to her children.

As demonstrated in the more recent interview with Diana (after 2 years in the program), she no longer presented herself apart from English. When I planned to review orally Diana's history at IIRI classes, I suggested that my bilingual colleague facilitate the interview in Spanish. I fully expected that bilingual assistance might be helpful with language and cultural nuances. Upon our arrival at her house, Diana readily agreed that the

interview be audiotaped, but declined the offer of bilingual assistance as unnecessary. She welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate her confidence with English. The contrast between the initial and final home visits to Diana also manifested a shift relative to her ease with print. When Diana served us fruit at the final visit, we saw her Spanish-English dictionary on the table. She called in "my very important book."

From May 1988 until her departure in August 1989, Diana moved through three levels of instruction. She knew and interacted with the students in all three of the 5 to 7 PM classes in which she participated. Diana progressed through the two beginning literacy classes, able to read and write enough subsequently to sustain her enrollment in the English Language Center beginning class. She presented herself in 1988 as knowing no English. She exited the program with a very different self perception and attitude toward English as a Second Language literacy. This movement signaled many benchmarks for Diana. Besides her progress in ESL literacy, it included her success in convincing her husband to join the Literacy/ESL Program at IIRI, greater confidence with her children and ease in relating with peers of other ethnicities. Diana's pride in her own progress motivated her often to speak encouraging words to others who feared that success eluded them.

Phuth Phong, a 54 year old woman from Cambodia, had studied in the Refugee Program at IIRI, but had not substantially advanced. In the spring of 1988, she began to study in Room 1. She continued in the program throughout its duration. On entry into the program, she had no prior education in her country of origin or native language literacy. The descriptions of her progress demonstrates the appropriateness of a model that met learners where they were and addressed their needs to interact with print. In the course of her partcipation in classes, her short term goal of enough oral fluency to be independent of her children's bilingual assistance at social service appointments expanded into an overall desire to grasp ESL literacy.

When I became Phuth Phong's teacher in May of 1988, her oral fluency was minimal and her ESL literacy was nonexistent. During eight months in a beginning literacy class, she progressed. She gained enough confidence to relate orally with learners of other ethnicities, e.g. asking Maria, a Spanish speaking woman, "You sick yesterday?" The daily interactive ap-

proach used in class demonstrated her own communicative potential to her. She risked conversations beyond those in Cambodian with friends and in English with the teacher.

Phuth retrieved sight words from new reading selections. As she began to decode and encode them from her own speech and that of others, she became more independent of bilingual assistance from her friends and more interactive with learners of other ethnicities helping her with reading and writing. Phuth also began to use her new strategies of partnering to read, having others read her writing aloud and using skills of decoding and encoding words to assist others in the class. She taught others how to access materials previously copied in their notebooks for new tasks, as well as how to refer to print on the blackboard, on calendars, signs and pictures.

Although Phuth initially protested a move to another slightly more advanced literacy class in the light of her progress, she soon adjusted. Instead of the co-teacher role she had assumed in Room 1, Phuth was challenged by other more advanced learners in the new class. Her journal writing in the new class and reading and writing for new meaning replaced the primary tasks of copying, labeling and reading familiar sight words in her former class. Except for infrequent absences due to illness, she never missed class, and she never missed class without calling to notify me.

The Southeast Asian Support Center at St. Joseph Hospital offered a learning group one morning a week for Cambodian women. Phuth joined it. She liked to be the scribe for the language experience stories. When she recorded participants' stories on newsprint, she often read them back and then questioned individual learners. She enjoyed a learning style that included reinforcing her own learning by teaching others. She nurtured others in the group, especially supporting beginners. Despite chronic ill health, Phuth took advantage of every learning opportunity. She continued to attend class in the IIRI Literacy/ESL Program besides going to class at the hospital. Already beyond her initial goal of going alone to appointments where she needed English, Phuth continued to develop her ESL literacy.

When I visited Phuth's home in the first year of her studies, I observed that she had created an environment for learning literacy in her own living room. Much like the border of letters of the alphabet that used to be found on the wall above blackboards

in many primary grade classrooms of the 50's and 60's, an alphabetic border lettered by Phuth spanned the top section of two adjoining walls of her living room. When I visited, I remarked about them and inquired whose letters they were. She proudly responded that she had made them to remind her of English. Interestingly, on one of the walls, this border crossed the top of her son's huge Michael Jackson poster. The only other print in that room was a Cambodian calendar from a nearby Southeast Asian Market. Phuth's living room wall portrayed both cultural and intergenerational differences in literate expression.

Phuth Phong came to the Literacy/ESL Program with some very definite ideas about her goals. Initially, she expressed them as relating to her independence from her children. She hoped not to have to depend indefinitely on her children for translating and interpreting at appointments and on documents. She reported early on in her studies that she already was able to do many things alone that she could not previously do. Achieving those goals did not mean termination from ESL literacy classes for Phuth. She faithfully attended the evening classes four nights a week at the Institute and also regularly participated for two hours each week in the Learning Support Group for Cambodian women at St. Joseph Hospital. My own sense of Phuth's development in literacy was that she increasingly desired to learn and do more. Along with the expansion of her strategies for communicating with English came the expansion of her goals in ESL/literacy. She no longer limited her talk about goals to the completion of specific tasks. Instead, she talked about learning English in general. I suspect that her initial successes bolstered her confidence in her own ability to succeed in a variety of communicative tasks and their consequent new cultural understandings.

Odilo Cabrera, a 44 year old man from Guatemala, studied in the Literacy/ESL Program from January 1989 until December 1989 in Room 1. He had no prior education or native language literacy. His desire for a Certificate of Satisfactory Pursuit from the Amnesty program motivated his participation in the program[1]. His willingness to attend Amnesty classes after his involvement in

[1] Programs addressing learning needs of applicants for Amnesty (pursuant to the Amnesty legislation of 1986) award Certificates of Satisfactory Pursuit, attesting to participants' attendance in 40 hours of classes. Odilo was identified as needing basic literacy skills in order to enable him to profit from those 40 hours, and so Amnesty staff referred him to the Literacy/ESL Program.

the Literacy/ESL Program serves to underscore the importance of acknowledging learners' attitudinal barriers to accessing education and needed avenues to easing transitions to educational settings for those not previously in contact with schools of any kind.

At an intake interview on January 9, 1989, a middle aged man from Guatemala reported (with bilingual assistance from a teenage daughter) that he had been referred to the Literacy/ESL Program by an interviewer from IIRI's Amnesty Program. He needed minimal fluency in English and some ESL literacy in order to participate in Amnesty classes. After attending evening classes for six months in the program, he re-registered for the Amnesty Program's summer module. He received his Certificate of Satisfactory Pursuit at the end of the summer, enabling him to gain legal immigration status. In the fall of that year he returned to the Literacy/ESL Program. He expanded his original goal of legalization. His own progress in both literacy and amnesty classes increased his confidence, self esteem and desire to continue to learn to read and write English.

In December of 1989, there was a problem with Odilo's attending class regularly. He got up very early in the morning to go to work and suffered, especially in the damp weather, with arthritis. The combination of pain and fatigue made class attendance impossible. Although we remained open to his eventual return to class, the discontinuity of his instruction made his progress with ESL very slow and every new return to school a "restart".

A curriculum for learners like Odilo whose attendance is not regular and for classes with changing composition is best described as a series of negotiations. A facilitator determined what would advance learners' interactions with print. These communications probed the tone – supportive and yet increasingly challenging – that needed to be set. Such communications also established an atmosphere in which all participants (teachers, facilitators, learners) became co-teachers and co-learners. The organizing principles and strands that intertwined and rewove to form the unique fabric of the class in Room 1 definitely resulted from the needs of the particular learners who lacked oral fluency or ease with the use of print, or who encountered other barriers to literacy. Since they were, at least initially, largely unable to recount stories and events from home, they focussed on what was available and present in the classroom as starting

points for communication: names, familiar images, numerals, and ways of acknowledging events like holidays and birthdays.

The topics around names, school, birthdays and holidays were the means of introducing print. In fact, introducing and reintroducing the steady stream of new learners to each other became the way to work with the alphabet (embedded in the participants' personal information), with numerals (reclarifications of information about telephone numbers, dates and time of class, numbers on rooms to which learners were assigned) and with basic conversations around culture (in the celebrations, e.g. of birthdays and holidays that coincided with class sessions).

As learners became more familiar with print, the recurring events of taking the news, doing dialog journals and working with picture stories solidified new learnings. These activities and materials for reading and writing prepared them for Room 6, a more advanced class, and subsequently for their access to mainstream ESL classrooms. Janet's description of Room 6, from which learners ultimately exited into mainstream ESL classrooms, follows.

Room 6: the facilitator's assumptions

Fran's reflections upon her interaction with learners in Room 1 describe both observable literacy behaviors and more subtle gains and changes evidenced by the learners with whom she interacted. My own observations may seem similar in many ways, which is not surprising, given that we worked with many of the same learners and with each other over the course of three years. We share many of the same assumptions towards what learning is and can be. Although I find myself unable to define literacy or literacies explicitly, I hope that the assumptions I hold might clarify my meanings in my discussions of learners and literacy. My assumptions are:

that learners come to class with extensive knowledge of the world and are capable of doing many things;

that literacy is socially constructed, and that reading and writing are socially situated occurrences;

that learners wish to learn to read and write in English for a variety of reasons;

that adults do things with reading and writing, and that part of the mutually constructed work that occurs within the classes I facilitate has to do with learning more about learners' own uses of reading and writing;

that there exists a plurality of literacies, and hence a plurality of uses, valuings and needs revolving around literacy and print interaction; these literacies span a continuum from functional (decoding/encoding) literacy to a more critical reading and writing of the word and the world (Freire[2]);

that reading and writing meaningful content subsume but do not exclude development of subskills in a contextualized manner;

that the learning process is enhanced when learners and facilitators work together from strengths each possesses, when learners and the learning process are valued, and when community is established among learners and teachers.

One broader assumption pertains to the understanding of literacy as one of many tools needed in a process of empowerment. In and of itself, literacy is not empowering, but exists as a tool or a weapon through which people may or may not act, or act differently to change their lives in some way.

These assumptions have evolved over ten years of teaching and learning with refugees and immigrants and have particularly changed during the three years in which I participated in the literacy program. The assumptions were regularly challenged, as were my notions of learning and teaching. Given this framework, then, the evolution of learning in Room 6 seems one of many possible replicable enactments of learners and facilitators constructing literacy learning together.

curriculum as process: Room 6

Room 6 began its evolution toward becoming a community of learners in January of 1988 when former Refugee Assistance Program learners began studying in the Literacy Program. Learners met four times weekly, from 5 to 7 p.m, as they had during the refugee program, which had ended before Christmas

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[2] Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educationalist, notes frequently that learning to read the word is one step of an educational process of learning to read the world.

vacation. Having studied together for six to eighteen months, most of the learners -- Southeast Asian refugees -- knew each other fairly well. It's possible that learners, at least initially, felt no visible change in the program, other than a longer than usual Christmas break. In fact, it's not clear to this day how much they knew (or we had told them) about the change in funding source and direction.

With the removal of refugee status as an entry constraint (the Refugee Program had received federal funding and had been open only to people with official refugee status), and as outreach continued with an ongoing open entry/open exit policy (discontinued this past October due to full classes and virtually no attrition), non-refugee learners gradually entered the program. For the Southeast Asians the arrival of the "Spanish" people initially resulted in the maintenance of separate camps. Seating arrangements were clearly determined by nationality and gender. The newly arrived Hispanic and Portuguese learners had to learn that their co-learners were not all Chinese (in fact, only three Chinese learners have participated in the program), but that they came from very different countries -- Cambodia and Laos primarily -- and represented different ethnicities.

During the first three months, facilitators were finding their way with the learners. We were finding our way without a curriculum as well. The program was not tied to the MELT[3] curriculum as it had been during the Refugee Assistance Program, and we were open to building curriculum with learners through our daily interactions with them in class. A good deal of language experience work was done, as well as work with phonics, which became increasingly contextualized. Where in March of 1988 a learner might have seen a list such as 'say, pay, day' written on the blackboard as an independent section of a learning session, by November of 1990 such decontextualized listing was far less likely to occur. Such a list might have been generated by asking learners (who recognize "Sunday" but are unable to see "day" as a word) to think of other words that sound like day. Learners might then suggest words like "play, stay home, pay", etc. This subtle shift in presentation represents an acknowledgement of the need for basic decoding skills, but a stronger belief in the fact that words/experience are known to and by the students and must be embedded in their prior know-

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[3] MELT, the Mainstream English Language Training project, was initiated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement in 1983 and developed a national competency based curriculum and test of oral and literacy skills for refugees.

ledge of the world and its words before they can be imposed upon them in a meaningless list.

Using a variety of means, then, the first three months were spent in trying to assess learners' needs, to provide opportunities for meaningful interaction with print and language and to nurture a sense of community. Polaroid photos were used extensively to generate learner writing about signs and buildings around the school, and to generate language experience stories about learners (written by and about each other).

After three months the original group was split in half, on the basis of literacy ability for the most part. Some learners with greater verbal fluency remained in Room 6, although their ability to interact with literacy was below that of their classmates. It was determined, however, that those beginning learners most in need of very basic literacy learning were also for the most part less fluent orally; hence we made the decision to leave that group at as much of a homogeneous level as possible. In effect Room 6 was viewed as the more advanced of the two classes. The division occurred for the following reasons: 1) two literacy specialists had been hired by that time, and were each available to teach from 5 to 7 pm; 2) a mandate of the program was to provide direct service (instruction) for those most in need of literacy learning; 3) the programs' research goals included examination of learners in different settings -- that of the previous large group, that of subsequent varying group configurations, and within mainstream ESL classes (viewing the effects of 'graduation' from one level to the next, exiting the Literacy Program into mainstream ESL).

The most significant gain made by the remaining group in Room 6 as a whole was its cohesion as a community of learners. Because of the scarcity of a common language during the height of its linguistic and ethnic diversity, English became a lingua franca in the classroom, and learners began to stretch their own networks of helping beyond the confines of their own language or nationality. At that point (November, 1988), the class was comprised of learners from Cambodia, Italy, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Laos, China, Liberia and Portugal. Additionally, a number of nearly literate learners were also in the class, doing much to help their peers by means of transcribing for them, helping them read and write and also translating when necessary. Videotaped recordings made at the time bear out the assertion that learners were engaged with print -- with or without the presence of a teacher. There was also an increase in

* * * * * * * * * * * ROOM 6 NEWS * * * * * * * *

NUMBER TWELVE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 19 - 22

HEALTH NEWS

Last week, on Friday, Delsa had shock therapy for her arm. She had therapy at Rhode Island Hospital. It hurt. She cried.

MORE HEALTH NEWS

Olindo is going to the hospital 3 days a week. He is going to get physical therapy for his leg. It takes about 10 or 20 minutes to drive to the hospital. On Monday, there was a lot of traffic on the highway.

Look at Olindo's appointment card from the hospital.

STURDY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL 222-5200

PHYSICAL THERAPY

	MAIN DEPT. EXT. 3243			OUT PATIENT CLINIC EXT. 3373		
DATE						
DAY	M	T	W	TH	F	S
TIME			2:30			

When is his next appointment?

What day? _____

What time? _____

What's the name of the hospital?

_____

Baby News

Sandy is 7 and ½ months pregnant now. She feels fine.
The baby feels fine, too.

This month is _____.

CALENDAR

Please circle the days we study this week.

September 1988

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

LAST SATURDAY

On Saturday, Sandy and her husband and some friends went out to eat pizza. They drove for half an hour to get the pizza. Sandy ate two slices of pizza.

On Saturday, Rorth and her husband went fishing. They caught a lot of fish. They cleaned the fish and they put the fish in the freezer.

What did you do on Saturday?

_____

Weather REPORT

This week, it's not too hot and not too cold.
We have had some clouds, and some rain showers.
September 21 is the first day of fall

clouds, mild,

possible showers

How many times did you read the word 'and'? _____

Please circle 'and'.

spontaneous interaction with print as people went to the blackboard to write things, clarify spellings for each other, respond to environmental print. As learners eventually left the program for mainstream ESL, new 'leaders' emerged, helping their newer or less capable classmates in ways that had been modeled by me and then by their more capable peers throughout the year. Students learned not only how to ask questions (for help, for clarification), they gained the metacognitive awareness of what to ask and why. They also, most importantly, gained the understanding that it is appropriate to ask for assistance, and we developed strategies for helping learners use the language and literacy they did possess to formulate questions and make sense of answers.

During the first year classes met from 5 to 7 PM, four days weekly, including during the summer. In the following two years some learners progressed and moved on to IIRI's core ESL program. Those who remained have made varying degrees of progress with literacy, and it is safe to say that virtually all of them have made considerable gains in terms of confidence and ability to ask -- for help, for clarification, for an opportunity to participate. The last two summers, because of constraints of Fran's and my time, learners were given the option of having a teacher in class one day a week, and working together (Fran's learners and mine) on writing in dialog journals and generating the Summer News without either teacher present on the second day. Both summers saw a slight decrease in attendance, but a significant number of learners remained and committed to studying -- even "without a teacher".

Within the last 12 months, learners have become more active in facilitating classes themselves and in helping each other approach reading and writing tasks. This independence has been greatly tested and demonstrated, not only during the summer months, but also during recent weeks (late November 1990 through the present), when Room 6 learners have joined together twice weekly with learners from Room 1, the latter frequently needing and seeking help from people studying in Room 6.

In re-examining interactions among learners we have found that the curriculum emerged (and emerges) retroactively, from the processes occurring within the classrooms. Melissa Johnson, a student at the University of Kentucky, spent four and a half months as a participant observer within the Literacy/ESL Program; she characterized events in Room 6 from January to June of 1990:

> The program's goal to view curriculum as processive and meaningful follows the tradition of Freire and whole language pedagogues in that the learners' experience formed content, which made every week different.... Most of the students in the class acknowledged the content as meaningful. The knowledge used to shape the curriculum has not been "deposited"... Many of these same students connected this kind of content to their satisfaction with the class. Not all however, agreed with the critical stance that "meaningful" meant pertinent to life knowledge and experiences. To JH, who left the course, "meaningful" took on another definition, that of being the grammatical and phonetic tools necessary to function outside of class...In general, a processive and meaningful curriculum are both goals and definitions of the program according to most of Rm. 6's participants. Those participants who reject this curricular approach have a different set of criteria for the best way to learn English. The program accommodates these varying agendas by being willing to recommend others or by devising ways to address that particular learner's needs.[4]

Ms. Johnson's study points to the importance of consideration of learner input in the examination of learning as it occurred in Room 6. Her insights during and after the time she spent with us as participant observer have helped me to see and understand the process from another angle.

The learner profiles that follow highlight things that worked; however, it's important to realize that a non traditional approach will not be suitable for all learners, even with concessions made on the part of the facilitators. For those learners the literacy program could not effectively serve, efforts were made to make referrals to more appropriate learning centers. In examining our documentation of classes and the learners with whom we worked, key questions do emerge. How do people create a learning community? Why is such a community valued by some learners and not valued (or valued as greatly) by others? How can the transitions from language experience writing and unconventional spellings and forms to more mainstream ways of using literacy be made? Do learners hope to make these tran-

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[4]Melissa Johnson, *Program ideology and participants' ideology and practice in an ESL/literacy class*, unpublished Masters' Thesis. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 1990, p. 87.

sitions? What are we doing anyway? The following learner profiles might bring these questions into sharper focus.

Arturo came to the literacy program in the spring of 1988 and has been a part of Room 6 since then, with various lapses in attendance due to health or family issues. His stated goal upon entry was to learn the alphabet, which he eventually did do that fall with the help of a home tutor after he'd been unable to drive to classes for a period of several months. He would leave, often for months, but did return to class throughout the duration of the program.

Mastery of the alphabet was Arturo's most important contribution to the class -- it was one area in which he could contribute to and participate along with other learners in the collective and cooperative writing that occurred daily within the class. At various times Arturo had worked with tutors in an early pull-out program; later changes in our thinking about 'pull out' tutoring led us to encourage assistance to Arturo within the class itself. As he came to establish his place in Room 6, he would freely access other learners as he needed their assistance.

Arturo had some firm notions about what literacy is when he joined the program. Every day, on a new sheet of paper in his notebook, he would write *Copia* on one line, and then write his name and address below it. Gradually the alphabet would become part of his heading -- often just producing the top of the sheet would consume his energy for the first fifteen minutes of class. He would shy away from reading at the blackboard until he'd been in class for over a year. He gradually did go to the board to write and would say (to another learner or to me), "OK, you help me," or, "only one person, not everybody"; making his needs and way(s) of learning clear, at least on some level. He did gain a sight word vocabulary and a sense of reading and writing as forms of communication. When he wanted to dictate something, he instructed his scribe, "OK, you write: Arturo said [whatever it was]. " He came to claim the group as a community to which he belonged. When he returned from an absence, others asked him where he'd been. Although he may not be a reader in any traditional sense of the word, it is possible that a traditional classroom might not have been useful for him. On the other hand, as Melissa Johnson describes below, such a classroom might have been very helpful to Ap and JH, whom she describes below:

Lopia

A S

14 Broadway
Pawtuchet. R I
02860

this is a mother's
day picture

I have the United States
four
I like go to School times a week

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Certainly not every student who entered Rm. 6 shared this view [of the importance of interaction and community in literacy learning] . A notable case was Ap, who left the program after only three days because the class failed to subscribe to the same top-down teaching techniques to which he had previously been exposed. Another case in which a student rejected the program's notion on the best way to learn English was JH. His reaction to the whole language process suggested that it failed to meet the demands and needs of these particular learners who wanted to learn English. He argued this point in the following interchange:
MJ: So you write about what they say? What they think and what they do? Is that...;
JH: I mean Janet say ... If Janet say, "JH, tell me what you do last night." I just tell her and then you write it on the table. They copy it, you know? That thing don't help people.
MJ: Why?
JH: ... I give them all the story, okay. Janet write it down or tells one of the people write. And then spell it, you know what I am saying? And everybody copy it. It no help those people. They just copy my words and then ... I don't see ... I don't think it help.

He dismissed the utility of authentic and interactive usage of texts. His adamant rejection might be contributed to his preset ideas of the correct way to learn English, or anything, in a formal setting, which he might have gained as a student in Haiti. A few other members of the class also had received formal education in their native countries; however, they did not dismiss the program entirely as a result of the different approach.

Ms. Johnson goes on to cite an article by Lisa Delpit which "argued that for many minority learners deviation from the teaching techniques that placed a high import on product, not process, mislead them to think that their own cultural and linguistic baggage would be accepted by the dominant society, [and that] inattention to product in a society whose emphases relied on the product would further hamper structural changes in the socioeconomic and political hierarchy."[5]

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[5] Melissa Johnson, pp. 70-72. The article cited by Lisa D. Delpit: The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*. Vol. 58, No. 20, 1988.

Although Delpit's article discussed the role of education in the lives of minority children, her point is well taken. It seems that Room 6 served a number of needs for its learners, and that academic learning or further formal education was not a goal for many of them. For some, however, it was, and as such, I view their time in Room 6 as a period of transition in many ways. They were moving from little previous successful interaction with literacy in English to overcoming affective and cognitive barriers to such interaction. Some will move on to mainstream ESL and then find their way into GED or other academic classes. Some will move onto mainstream ESL in order to feel more comfortable with their interaction with spoken and written language.

Sandy Chan is a learner who may illustrate this discussion. She came to the program in January of 1988. Clearly literate in Chinese, she was unable to speak very much English at all and was hesitant and reticent to speak much of the time.

She attended classes regularly, while working both at a factory sewing job, and at her husband's small food store nearby. It was evident early on that her previous education assisted her in transferring her literacy skills in Chinese into English. In the early months of her studies, she would transliterate many English words with Chinese characters so that she would be able to read and pronounce them. As she progressed in understanding sound/symbol correspondences, her use of transliteration decreased accordingly. She carried an English-Chinese dictionary with which I was able to 'translate' many words for her. I would locate the word in English and she would read its Chinese equivalent. As time went on, she was able to locate the words herself. An informal assessment indicated her ability to alphabetize and to use alphabetical order in locating words.

Sandy left school in November of 1988, when her first child was born. When I went to see her in the hospital the day after the birth, I noticed an address book under the pillow of her bed, with names and numbers of people she wanted to call to notify about the baby. My name and the school phone number were on the top of the list. The other learners were thrilled when they learned that she'd had a son.

Sandy attempted to return to class, but her attendance was irregular because of problems finding child care. She would come once or twice a week and stay for only an hour. Eventually, she did have a few consecutive months' study, during

which time she disclosed that she was pregnant again. In the fall of 1989, we attempted to get her into the Genesis Center for full day classes, but they had no room left in their child care center, so that she was unable to study there. She did attend some evening classes at IIRI, again sporadically. We exited her into the ELC classes meeting at 5 o'clock. Her attendance fell off, however, because she felt that she could not keep up with the other students in the class. We decided to listen to that resistance and invite her to rejoin the literacy class. However, at that time, she went to Hong Kong for two weeks (in October) and never returned to classes.

Sandy's daughter was born prematurely in January of 1990. Since that time, although she hasn't returned to classes (except to visit during the summer), our contacts have increased. We tried again to get her into Genesis Center, and again were unable to. She started attending the Providence Public Library's Family Literacy classes at the South Providence Branch and has encouraged her close friend and neighbor (another Chinese mother of two) to attend with her. Although she has a driver's license, she is largely homebound. I visit and we speak to each other by phone at least every other day. She repeatedly speaks about the importance of going to school, I believe because she seeks greater independence in order to function far more fully than she currently can. She speaks about doing things "later" when her children are old enough to be in school. To prepare for "later", she has books and tapes at home, calls and spells words she wants to know, shows me papers and asks about things she sees and hears on TV all the time. Sandy's metacognitive awareness and strategies for learning continue to astonish me. She could as easily return to factory sewing as she could embark upon a more academic career. I've no doubt that she has the capacity for either, and I look forward to seeing how her goals vis a vis English literacy and learning might change as her children grow. I describe Sandy here because I believe she demonstrates not only the multiplicities of literacies one person might embrace; she also typifies the possibilities one person might encounter as s/he continues to learn within a participatory setting, and beyond.

68 Name _____ Date _____

Do you have a library card? _____

Does anyone in your family have a library card? _____

PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY
KNIGHT MEMORIAL LIBRARY
275 ELMWOOD AVENUE
455-8102

OPEN

MONDAY	10-8
TUESDAY	10-8
WEDNESDAY	10-8
THURSDAY	12-8
FRIDAY	10-5

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

July 4
August 14
September 4

These are the hours that the library on Elmwood Avenue is open during the summer.

1. Is the library open on Saturday?

_____

2. Is the library open on Sunday?

_____

3. Can you go to the library on Thursday morning

_____

4. Can you go to the library at 7 P.M. on Friday?

_____

5. When does the library close on Tuesday?

_____

6. What are the holiday closing dates? _____

_____

7. Who went to the library on June 27? _____

_____

8. What happened at the library?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

collaboration

The collaborative approach to professional development in the Literacy/ESL Program joined IIRI personnel (administrators, teachers, facilitators, students, volunteers) and providers from other agencies in qualitatively improving English as a Second Language learners' instruction in literacy and increasing their access to opportunities for advancing their literacies. A participatory approach replaces what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire refers to as a banking concept of education, a one way transfer of knowledge, e.g. from educators to learners, from trainers to trainees, etc. Instead, our collaborations modeled what Freire terms a pedagogy of knowing, exchanges among people, transforming ways of thinking and acting. These relationships -- among trainers and trainees, teachers/ facilitators and students, volunteers and supervisors -- enable all participants, as learners, to think critically together beyond the specific content of class sessions to its significance in their lives. This liberatory approach to education attempted to model ways in which participants extend their ways of knowing, as well as their knowledge, to a wider community.

What does professional development mean to practitioners and volunteers?
What's the difference between teacher training and teacher education?
Why did the Literacy/ESL Program address issues of teacher development?

The teacher training component of the IIRI Literacy/ESL Program emerged as a collaborative model after dialogue between agency teachers and literacy program staff. Teachers' feedback at a series of informal group meetings and workshops pointed to the value of structuring a variety of forms of exchange. The teachers' diverse backgrounds, needs, schedules and interests precluded the effectiveness of general, formal "training" sessions. Literacy staff, therefore, explored ways to collaborate with individual teachers in expanding awareness of literacy processes and promoting inquiry, interaction and further growth and learning.

Interaction and collaboration with teaching staff included ongoing projects, sporadic (as needed) conferences, consultations and meetings, and regular classroom observation and/or

demonstration. By the fall of 1988, the staff had introduced program components, elicited teachers' perceptions of needs and made initial contacts with teachers interested in maintaining ongoing individual consultation/collaboration. Workshops were designed to demystify the intent of the Literacy/ESL Program and to build on the goal of collaboration and construction of an effective model of teacher education. Initial resistance to/misunderstanding of the program's intent has lessened over the past three years. Other issues, such as resistance to change and varying views of learning itself, are more processive and ongoing.

Although meeting separately from teacher staff development events, volunteer workshop sessions embraced the same approach as those designed for agency teaching staff. For both groups, our goal was to surface participants' knowledge and understanding about ESL/literacy learning among non native speakers of English, in order to be able to determine appropriate workshop process and content, as well as to provide ongoing support within a collaborative framework. We believe that our work is generalizable and replicable to the extent that questions can be derived from our practice and processes; new processes evolve to meet the needs of other specific situations.

professional development - IIRI educational division staff

Part of the stated mission of the Literacy/ESL Program was to provide: technical assistance pertaining to literacy to ESL providers, workshops for social services providers and inservice sessions designed to meet the particular needs of community-based, social service and/or educational provider agencies. Given our conviction that learning and teaching are collaborative endeavors, we sought to expand much of our own learning about literacy and to share our findings with other teachers and volunteers through co-teaching classes, doing demonstration classes and workshops and facilitating discussion groups.

Interaction between literacy program staff and other agency facilitators became a strong component of the literacy program, despite an initial period of uncertainty. Neither program staff nor our colleagues in other ESL programs had a clear idea of what it would mean for us to be available to them for assistance or collaboration. While we were sure that we weren't attempting to pass ourselves off as experts in the field, we did know that we were spending a great deal of time and energy learning about

literacy for adult non native speakers of English and ways in which to facilitate more positive means of learning for students and teachers alike.

Although we interacted informally with teachers prior to September of 1988, the bulk of our collaborative activity evolved from that time onward. Prior to active one-on-one interaction, workshops were held for site staff as they returned to teach that fall. What follows is an outline of the workshops we planned and an account of the ways in which they were implemented. The outline is presented here as a possible guide to those invested in designing staff development based on articulated needs and interests of participants.

proposed outline for workshop one

Participants will review, discuss and respond to:
-- literacy program needs assessment: what it is, where it came from;
-- assessment/evaluation sheets;
-- discrete components in holistic evaluation overlap among/between 'discrete' skills
- How does this impact upon teachers' current understandings?
- What questions can be generated to direct further work?

Staff response to the needs assessment was underwhelming. Because this was our first formal session with teaching staff from other IIRI ESL programs, we wanted to share the findings of the needs assessment in order to frame the program in a context. The needs assessment grid, however, in which component pieces of the assessment had been laid out, seemed complex, and the language in which the assessment was written was more indirect than that of a group of teachers sitting around talking. It seemed more productive to set that aside and to have teachers directly identify their own needs. Where we were looking at issues of professional growth, some people were thinking of the first night of classes, one week away; others were contemplating access to the photo copying machine or wondering how to get an easel to hold a flipchart. What we learned from the first session was that just as we had needed a needs assessment to ground our plans for learners within the program, we also needed to do some assessing of what our colleagues needed as well.

Staff also needed clarification about what had "something to do with literacy" and what was "just ESL". The citizenship/ESL teacher asked about ways in which materials could be adapted to meet the range of literacy levels encountered within a single classroom. Others spoke about the common problem of multilevel classes in which learners with great oral fluency and limited literacy ability were mixed with people for whom reading and writing were not problematic.

Learners in the English Language Center (ELC) are placed in classes on the basis of oral/aural ability, and one of the key needs identified in establishing the literacy program was finding appropriate means through which to integrate non- or low-literate students into the (mainstream) ESL class. At the beginning of the school year many teachers were under the impression that Literacy staff would take learners out of classrooms for tutoring and 'fix' their problems. The process of rectifying misconceptions and changing this inherently deficit view of learners was (and is) a lengthy one, involving learning and reflection on the part of teaching staff. During the first workshop, however, we mostly took note of what teachers were saying and responded to their concerns by trying to explain that we were surfacing issues/directions for the coming year, and by suggesting that we wanted to look at ways for teachers to be able to help multilevel literacy learners within the same classroom. The overarching aim of the staff development component of the program was to enable existing agency staff to increase their ability to address literacy needs within their own respective classes.

Initial discussion was guided by the questions raised by teachers at that first meeting, as we especially wanted them to know that their concerns would form the basis of the interaction that would follow throughout the year.

After teachers had raised their issues, we invited them to consider ways in which to assess learners' literacy abilities. We brainstormed informal methods of recognizing learners' struggles with literacy through attentive observation. Someone suggested that learners who "forget" their glasses might be having problems with reading and writing. Another teacher spoke about resistance to certain kinds of reading or writing exercises or numeracy problems which might appear when people chronically fail to find a page in a book or a numbered exercise on a worksheet. Joking and giggling might indicate discomfort, embarrassment or nervousness.

Recognizing these indications, what does the teacher do? Questions raised did in fact touch upon those issues we'd anticipated in our original outline and included: Do I start with the alphabet? What about the first day of class -- why not write? Why write? How much writing should we do? How do I teach this person to make words? sentences? How do I divide my time? What materials do I use? How do I structure the class in order to balance needs and address different levels? How do people express themselves in a language they don't read? Why do some students leave classes and never return? How can I know if students are following along in the language lab? How can I motivate students to want to read?

Although we didn't attempt to answer these questions explicitly, we did try to facilitate some discussion around the questions and then, because of time constraints, were able to tell workshop participants that these questions and concerns would form and inform the content of subsequent workshops. We gave them a short article on ESL literacy ("What is this thing called literacy?" from the *ESL Literacy Bulletin*, Nov., 1986), realizing that they still seemed to downplay the presence of literacy problems in other than beginning levels. Fran observed that we were trying to expand their understandings of literacy in general while focussing attention on their own students' literacy needs.

This workshop fairly well exemplified the kinds of questions and the directions in which discussions can go. Teachers came to sessions with their own sets of experience and assumptions and began from those places. Our contention is that both as a group working interactively and collaboratively, and as reflective individuals, teachers will begin to broaden their ideas about what literacy is and how learners learn during the course of sustained and ongoing staff development activity.

the second meeting

At the second meeting (held the following week) we had planned to discuss the article we'd distributed during the first meeting, but it soon became apparent that only one person had read it. As she discussed her reactions to it, others began reading it and were encouraged to read it fully later and to further consider learners' purposes for studying.

We had briefly spoken about the advisability of not depending too heavily on print during the first week of classes in order not

to overwhelm people for whom literacy was problematic. Thus we asked participants how they would begin: "What works?" People mentioned self-introduction, answering the question, "Why are you here?", and oral substitution drills, with a kind of chain drill introduction among learners.

From there we touched upon the uses of dialog journals and photo journals (for storing new words and images for beginners). We tried to introduce a variety of appeals to individual learning styles (auditory, visual, receptive, productive, tactile, etc.). Again, during this session we were attempting to begin not only a dialog with and among the group, but also between ourselves and the teachers with whom we would be working individually throughout the coming year. We gave people copies of an ALBSU article on initial assessment of reading skills which deals with hands on issues relating to materials and readers' interactions with them.[1]

Fran observed that teachers' requests for demonstrations that they could then replicate were indicative of their own (and our) training within models of receptivity. Our work was directed at collaboration, interaction and productive participation.

the third meeting

For the third meeting with ELC night staff prior to the beginning of classes, we had planned to:

- elicit feedback from participants about the previous meeting, their readings and observations of our (beginning level) literacy classes;
- suggest and demonstrate introduction activities for the classroom;
- talk about the language experience approach and expansion activities;
- discuss next steps for people individually and for the group.

One teacher began by remarking that our students were more advanced than she had anticipated and commented on the degree to which they were able to interact with print. This raised an interesting issue of perceptions of and assumptions about

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[1] McCulloch, Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, *Initial Assessment of Reading Skills.*

literacy and pre-literacy. People still seemed to believe that literacy work really pertained to the absolute beginner; otherwise, the reaction was, "Hey, they can write." In responding to teachers' observations, Fran spoke briefly about the progress that the learners had made during the seven months in which they'd been in class prior to that observation.

This discussion was followed by one about the reading we'd given to teachers at the previous meeting. As before, there was some leafing through materials and little comment. We stressed that they were welcome to approach us individually, should they want to discuss the material later, and went on to the other topics at hand.

This session differed slightly from the previous two in that each of us spoke for about half an hour. Although we welcomed response and interaction, we'd gotten clear indications that people wanted to be given certain ideas and information; this was the training format with which they were familiar. In reconsidering, again, our notions of learner centered practice, we realized that we similarly needed to be sensitive to the prior knowledge and expectations of our colleagues and to try to meet them at a point that would be comfortable for them. Hence, we were somewhat more presentational than interactive during much of the meeting, in trying to accommodate the participants and to work with them from a place where they were comfortable and to meet them at their points of readiness.

Janet began with ideas for introduction activities. She asked participants to ask each other one or two questions, to find out something that they may not have known about each other and to present that information back to the group.

One teacher asked if learners wouldn't need to be able to write to keep track of the information gathered during the paired interviews. That observation (that she found herself taking notes) led to an important piece of the process of ongoing assessment. When students interview each other, it's important to observe how they interact not only with each other, but also if, in fact, they do use writing to record information, take notes, etc. The teacher's comment also points to another implicit assumption about people who are not literate (and those who are). People who cannot read often have other ways of keeping track of information and use many coping strategies to compensate for or complement the use of writing, per se. Therefore, close observation of learners' interactions might give some preliminary

information into ways in which learners go about obtaining, storing and processing new information.

The discussion led to talk about possible expansion activities up and down level. Listed ideas for work in introductions with individuals, pairs and groups included:

-- oral questions/responses
-- written questions/responses
-- pre-written questions
-- information grids
-- listing brainstormed questions on the blackboard
-- *Jazz Chant* "Personal Questions"[2]

This brainstorming of ways to build incrementally into further introduction/interaction activities (an hour the first day, half hour on subsequent days), focussing on non-personal personal information -- work, food in native country, preferences (food, music, etc.) -- led into the discussion of dialog journals, which also presume a gradual process of building into written communication patterns.

Janet introduced the journaling process and asked explicitly if the previous work on introductions lent itself to being transferred to introducing dialog journals to a class. We discussed various ways to build the journaling process, gave teachers a handout delineating further suggestions, and then invited teachers to journal about their work with us.

Fran then described a language experience approach process she'd developed with her learners. She described various pieces of the process of creating the story -- from writing on the blackboard to rewriting on newsprint -- including eliciting questions, satisfying curiosities and giving closure. Other expansion activities were discussed, such as using photos and lined paper to allow students to produce as much or as little writing as they could.

We concluded the session by offering participants the option of contacting us when they felt ready to have us observe their classes. We made it clear that we could come for a brief period (30 minutes of a two-hour session) or for a more extended time, in order to come to know their classroom situation and to share observations during the initial assessment week.

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[2] Graham (1978). *Jazz Chants*, p 23.

the first year

During that first year we developed a system of documenting staff contact, generating a sheet on which the teacher's name and that of the key contact (Fran or Janet) was written. Initial contact and subsequent contacts throughout that academic year were noted. Typical entries would be comprised of the date, the nature of the interaction (demonstration class, observation, informal meeting) and comments about the interaction itself and any follow up. We developed folders of our written observations, samples of learners' work and notes of discussions held with teachers.

Teachers in the educational programs at IIRI came from different ethicities and educational backgrounds, as did the learners. Some were native speakers of English and some were not. Sociocultural factors and their own perceptions of their roles in the classroom affected their practice and their experience of efforts to enhance staff professional development.

Andrea Mueller, originally from West Germany, began teaching in the English Language Center at IIRI in September of 1988. She facilitated a beginning level class from 7 to 9 PM four nights a week until her maternity leave in the winter of 1990. She went on to work part time in a teacher education project elsewhere, but remained in contact with Literacy/ESL Program staff, exchanging teaching materials, professional reading and ideas for instructional strategies with us.

Andrea Mueller reminisced about her initial frustration in teaching at IIRI in a conversation with us several months after the termination of her employment at the Institute. She recounted the comparisons she had made between her own learning and that of her beginning learners at IIRI. In retrospect Andrea recognized her own expectations of the learners as the source of her frustrations with their apparent lack of progress. Andrea said, "I could not teach them the way I had been taught." She remembered her own learning as always teacher oriented and very sequential. Her adult students' immediate needs and requests often pre-empted her own lesson plans, and her responses could not be easily sequenced as lessons.

In addition to changing her expectations and attitudes,

Andrea recalled her need to shift her ideas about the role of the teacher. She talked about her own process of learning English in Germany from teachers who decided the grammar she should learn and the selection of dialogs to be memorized from texts and then used for pattern practice. She realized, "I couldn't teach my students that way because they were on different levels, had different educational backgrounds and not very regular attendance, so it wasn't possible to build lesson after lesson."

Andrea gave the example of trying to help people learn to add "s" to the third person singular verbs they wrote and then realizing that that was what she wanted to teach, and maybe not what they wanted to learn. When they didn't remember the lesson the next time, she was frustrated. The results of her teaching were disappointing. She said, "I couldn't see my own effect."

Andrea talked about the non authoritarian, non threatening way in which teachers were helped. In particular, she saw the merits of a program in which trainers were not in positions of authority. She felt that if the person responsible for hiring and firing was also the one visiting classes, evaluating and making employment decisions, there would be a pressure set up for the teacher. She observed that she and other teachers experienced resistance to training and professional development when jobs seemed to be in jeopardy as a result of what occurred during supervisors' classroom observations. She wanted the trainer to come to the class to make the teaching better, not to exert pressure by representing a threat to employment. Professional development meant "getting a different perspective on how things could be done." She talked about Janet coming in and "making LEA look easy, demonstrating in class how learners could all get really involved, how (working at it), Janet could extract from the LEA story the grammar lessons embedded in it."

Andrea singled out as being very valuable to her the model of professional development used at the Institute: her documentation project (cited in the section on action research), Fran and Janet's visits to her class and the readings recommended to teachers and discussed at meetings. She said that documenting classes for six weeks during her project forced her to look more closely at each person in the class and see little steps, things otherwise hard to pinpoint. She talked about having no resistance to Janet and Fran's visits to class because they became demonstrations that helped her practice. She felt no threat to her job. She began to see her learners "say a little more" and become more comfortable participating in class. By stepping back

a little to observe her learners during demonstrations by other teachers and in her own documentation, Andrea could see more. Literacy facilitators' visits to her classroom made her see in practice what was being talked and read about with other teachers. It also provided her with a good way to adjust her expectations of learners and to deal with pacing the materials to them.

What evoked Andrea's remarks to us? How did she begin to conceptualize what had occurred? In an interview on July 5, 1990, Andrea began to describe a teachers' meeting she attended. She described the urgency she felt to respond to what she heard from teachers about their learners' current knowledge. She heard some teachers focussing on what learners "should" know and didn't, "should" be able to remember and couldn't, and a whole range of expectations that prevented the teachers from appreciating the learners where they were. She began to suggest substituting what's already there for what's not there as a starting point for formulating expectations. She volunteered to give two workshops: one on writing from drawing and the other one was on how to extend a topic.

She also reported having applied for a job as a teacher trainer in a program where she works part time. It required her sitting in on training and visiting classes. She described the feeling of empowerment that she could only recognize in retrospect, a slow infiltration. She thought she could work with other teachers, especially given her identification with and empathy for the ESL learner. Andrea saw the benefits of more input from teachers and less top down training in programs. For her it made a difference. She felt that it also empowered her to recognize the parallels in teaching and parenting. She described this shift to a more positive approach as an imperceptible move.

Sandra Morra, a long time community activist, came to the Institute in 1985 to coordinate and teach in its Citizenship/ESL program. Since then, she has worked in Amnesty programs as a materials and curriculum developer and, most recently in the Literacy/ESL Program, where she taught a beginning level class four nights a week, from 7 to 9 PM. In the account below she reflects on her first ESL literacy class.

"When I entered my first class targeting populations with no previous education or native language literacy, I realized that

"When I entered my first class targeting populations with no previous education or native language literacy, I realized that none of my previous teaching experiences had prepared me for the kinds of hurdles these students would have to cross. What were they? I didn't know. Fortuitously, my immediate recognition of these questions led me on a quest which I called "the garden." In order to make sense of the voluminous amounts of research needed in order to identify, never mind meet, the needs of these students, I kept a daily journal, comparing my teaching to my gardening. In my writing I slipped in and out of a garden as a metaphor and as a beacon.

"The metaphor of the garden was simple. The learning to take place (embodied by the students) was like the plants. The class environment was like the soil. Since the garden in my yard is an organic one, there are no quick fixes there. That was the realization that drew me to the garden as a metaphor. I knew there would be no quick fixes in the class. As I learned and grew with the class, I drew upon the holistic nature of the garden, referencing how problems are solved. The garden served as a kind of beacon for how to solve some of the challenges I encountered with students.

"Preparing for the class was really a fantasy in critical thinking. This sounds like a contradiction in terms, but it was not. The imaginary steps I took enabled me to consider better the real possibilities at hand. In addition, peer collaboration with other teachers over my daily journal and with learners in the class provided input and experience to the process and helped with specific dilemmas and concerns.

"Peer collaboration among learners proceeded in a no fault mode. It proved to be a thought provoking and stimulating process. I have encouraged other willing fledgling facilitators to try this process. Not only my teaching, but also my means and ways of perceiving life and learning have been changed by a very holistic yet scientific methodology, much like the one I use in my real beloved garden."

The process of active interaction with agency staff varied, as might be expected, in relation to the attitudes and needs of the staff itself. We encountered resistance, acceptance, embracing of change and saw people moving at their own paces along continuua of learning and growth. We also witnessed a growth in interaction among all teaching staff, as evidenced by increased informal collaboration and helping, visits to observe other

facilitators' classrooms, increased participation in local and regional staff development events and overall increased capabilities in terms of using material and human resources more effectively in meeting the needs of IIRI ESL and ESL/ literacy learners.

professional development - IIRI volunteers

Volunteers arrive at the International Institute for multiple reasons and through various sources. Institutional collaboration with the Brown Center for Public Service and through organizations such as Literacy Volunteers of America has resulted in cross-training and sharing of volunteer resources. Occasional notices listed through Volunteers in Action have also provided volunteers for special needs in various IIRI programs. Other people from the community at large contact the agency in order to volunteer their time and are either invited in to visit classes individually or are invited to participate in a series of group workshop sessions, when numbers warrant. Generally, there is a demand for workshops (that is, many people tend to call in to volunteer) during the beginning of the school year in September. As the Literacy Program gained momentum (and learners) it began to develop its own series of workshops, described below. What follows is a description of the initial intake process for volunteers and a description of volunteer interaction with the program over its three years.

Individuals who contacted the Literacy Program in order to provide volunteer service were invited into a collaboration with agency personnel. Using a variety of interactive means -- initial interview, reflection sessions after observing/participating in classes, input sessions on cultural issues and language experience approach -- program staff sought to provide the prospective volunteer with the information and experience needed to make an informed decision about his/her involvement in the program.

If a volunteer decided to enter into a commitment within the program, s/he was presented with options for professional education similar to those available in the teacher education component of the program. Staff assisted in choosing the frequency and particular nature of volunteer service to be rendered. An ongoing contact system was set up between a staff person and a volunteer, through which they periodically processed the events of the learning situation, monitored student progress and set

direction. Staff liaisons and volunteers were involved in ongoing classroom interaction with literacy learners and so were able to share the social contexts of each other's learning situation. This contact created a meaningful basis through which to further interaction with print between learners, e.g. introductory photo stories, letter writing, journaling, etc. In addition to interaction with learners, staff and volunteer collaboration extended the volunteer's knowledge base as his/her involvement and interest dictated.

the volunteers

During the program's first summer, we facilitated a series of workshops for four individuals who had expressed interest in volunteering time to the program. The workshop model developed for those individuals and outlined here is not intended to be prescriptive. Rather, it is our hope that it may serve to guide other literacy practitioners in thinking through their own inservice and volunteer education programs. What follows is an outline of the working model and a view of its development and evolution through the program's three years.

working model volunteer education / ESL / literacy:

<u>draws on participants' previous knowledge and assumptions</u>

structure:
- linear - dissemination of information
- recursive - processing of information
- participatory

content / activities:

- readings/response	journaling
- group/individual interaction	observation
- dialog	classroom interaction

In planning the first workshop for volunteers, we brainstormed and generated our goals and objectives for the series of workshops and ways in which to engage volunteers in a participatory learning experience. We wanted to:

- engage participants in discussions about their goals and ours;
- replicate learner-centered instruction;
- balance information to be conveyed and elicited;
- recognize explicitly the totality/multiplicity of literacies;

– engage in exploration of the continuum of literacy components, from whole language to discrete skills and to the notions of usage and skills, from the global to the specific;
– explore metacognition through guided observation of learners.

Our outline for the first session looked like this:

Why are folks here? – introductions

beginning discussion: What are definitions/understandings of literacy? [describing literacy]

writing/processing exercise:
What did you read or write since this afternoon?
– awareness of uses of reading and writing
– what would you have done had you not been able to find a pencil?
– what would you have done had you not been able to read a given text/phone number, etc.?
– technical aspects of literacy (skills, mechanics, etc.)
– uses of literacy

making it concrete:
pre-observation questions focusing on:
- – who are the learners?
- – what have they overcome to be able to attend classes?
- – what literacies exist within a class/among learners?
- – what is a literacy event or activity?
- – what are uses of literacy within a class (write date, illustrate, clarify, spell)?
- – why are some learners homebound?

writing: journaling and/or writing in a dialog journal with us in the areas of:
– quantifying qualitative information/observations
– describing [volunteers'] experience of school/language learning

options: assist in research
provide direct service
inservice: collaborate/provide ongoing support to themselves, each other

The first workshop

Participants were asked to speak to why they'd decided to enter into volunteering. We hoped to build connection among the volunteers as well as between them and ourselves.

All four were women; three had some awareness of other cultures and had worked in various contexts with non native speakers, two in educational settings and one in a hospital. Their responses indicated that they had a grasp of the general differences to be expected within cross cultural interaction. There was a need to expand their knowledge of specific ethnic/ cultural groups, which they were desirous of exploring.

The reading/writing recall exercise (borrowed from Gail Weinstein-Shr) generated interesting comments about participants' interactions with literacy: how literacy use is taken for granted, and how literacy use is not differentiated from normal activity and is 'part of the scenery'.

Participants also discussed various coping strategies that they'd used as tourists and that they'd imagined people would use in this country. They explored some of the affective effects of illiteracy and/or limited literacy ability within a western urban setting.

We concluded this first meeting by setting times to meet with participants both individually as well as in a group three weeks later.

During the interim time, each participant was engaged in observation of ongoing classes at the Institute, and two of them began working with individual learners. One woman was working as a classroom ESL instructor in a summer program for Hmong youth. All three met with us individually between the first and second workshops.

the second workshop

When we reconvened the group, participants recounted their experiences from which Fran developed a language experience story. Janet worked with people in developing other discrete skills within that content, to model ways in which LEA activities can be expanded and adapted to meet learners' needs at a variety of levels. Fran then facilitated a free writing activity designed to lead people into thinking about journaling in one form or another.

To conclude the meeting, we distributed cultural and pedagogical background material, from Nina Wallerstein's *Language and culture in conflict*, and refugee writings from a local newspaper article. We asked participants to list groups of assumptions (I think, I believe....) and also to list things they wanted to know more about vis a vis second language literacy learning and learners. This process of listing assumptions and questions is a useful heuristic device not only for problematizing one's view of literacy and learning; it also becomes a way of creating benchmarks. Dating the lists and questions and returning to them periodically gives the volunteer/practitioner a sense of her/his own development as a co-learner in the literacy process.

the third workshop

By this time one of the volunteers had dropped out, two were unable to attend because of scheduling conflicts, and Elizabeth, the remaining volunteer, came in on her own. We met with her and discussed her work with her learner and the readings we'd distributed. All four participants were invited to join the agency's larger ESL volunteer orientation that October.

what happened to the volunteers

Elizabeth worked throughout the year with a Portuguese learner with near native oral proficiency, but with severe literacy needs. Catherine, the second volunteer, eventually became a substitute, then part-time facilitator within the literacy program. The third volunteer, who'd been working with a home bound Hispanic man, resumed her responsibilities at Brown University where she coordinated student volunteers. The fourth volunteer dropped out, apparently because she found the experience more difficult than she'd anticipated. She felt overwhelmed by graduate school and other commitments, and although she'd initially expressed great enthusiasm, she did not participate in any tutoring at all.

Since working with this initial group of volunteers, we have encountered individuals who came and went for brief spells of time. In assessing our interaction with volunteers that first summer, and after subsequent large group orientation sessions, we found that working individually and participatorily with volunteers is more effective and satisfying for all concerned than recruiting and working with larger groups. As of this writing, one former learner from Room 6 has joined her former classmates as a volunteer tutor and several students from Brown University act as in-class mentors/tutors for literacy program learners .

Elizabeth Wessen worked as a volunteer in the Literacy Program from June of 1988 until May of 1989. She worked closely with a learner, Joe, and at the end of their tutoring sessions, she wrote a lengthy progress report on their work together, from which the following is taken: [Joe] " was difficult to know initially ... [he] reported to me that he had been diagnosed ... to have a disability that precluded learning to read and write. [He] had reached the 9th grade in the American school system and could not read the word "I" in our first session.... "at the beginning of every class I ask him what's new and he invariably replies "nothing." Every once in a while, however, something of salience will surface. One of his dreams is to learn to drive and achieve that measure of independence. We have discussed the possibility of acquiring a license ... but he fears that he'll be a hazard if he cannot read the street signs. I have tried to employ the technique of using subject matter from Joe's own experience to build the classes. Unfortunately, he offers very little material for that purpose. It requires a reach from me to find something that relates to him, that might be interesting to him for a focus to the lessons ... now I believe that he's self motivated and well supported. His life does appear to be very limited -- I wonder whether this is self-imposed, a function of an overprotective family, or the result of a very inflexible intolerant society. As a coping style he has probably attempted to become 'invisible', and in this way has coped very well. At any rate, if I were available at this point in time, I would follow his lead and simply not give up. It has taken some finessing of my tolerance for repetition and refueling of my reservoirs of patience, but he is determined. It should be so easy for us to provide the minimum essentials of consistency and encouragement. He deserves it."

(After Elizabeth's year with Joe, Janet worked with him for a year, and called upon Sally Gabb, director of education and training (Adult Education for Adults in Transition) at Travelers Aid of Rhode Island, for assistance; Sally referred us to the Adult Academy at Brown University, where volunteers are prepared particularly to work with learners with serious learning needs. Gretchen Hull, a volunteer from that agency, began work with Joe in September of 1990.)

what works, what doesn't work: learning from the process

It's clear that we need to examine our failures as well as those

more gratifying experiences with volunteers and to learn from those missed opportunities in order to provide more useful experiences for all concerned.

The fourth volunteer had begun enthusiastically, but began backing off as the realities of home tutoring in a rundown urban neighborhood in high summer set in. Possibly her interest had caused her to oversimplify what would be entailed in meeting her original plan of working with an individual learner through a mental health agency. It's possible that she had been unable to visualize what the experience would look like in three dimensions. Fran had been her primary contact into the program and had been supportive of her needs, while trying to maintain an objective view of what opportunities would be available to her, as well as sensing that she wasn't able to take on the commitment at that time. Fran views the process as ultimately a successful one, in that through mutual decision making this volunteer was able to observe classes, look clearly at the task and where she'd fit in and temper her expectations accordingly. She realized that tutoring would entail more time, commitment and preparation than she'd anticipated and hence decided not to pursue the project. What was avoided was disappointment on the part of a learner, frustration for the tutor and a sense of failure for all. This process of mutual decision making between staff and potential volunteers is critical to the needed fit between volunteer, task and learner.

During one large group workshop when we were entrenched in our own academic work, we lost participants because we were unable to make a needed discourse shift from academic prose to speak 'plain' English and to elicit more participation from the group. Additionally, overhead vent fans were noisy, making it difficult to hear; the seating was poorly arranged so that people were unable to see and hear each other very well. A few participants who survived that first meeting did enter into volunteer commitments with ELC. One woman spent 8 productive weeks with the literacy program and described her experience in the program's second newsletter.

Although we were able to involve participants in this group session, we did learn the need for either insisting on smaller groups or finding more structured participatory activity for engaging a larger group (12+) of people at a first meeting. We've also found that rather than inviting people to sit and listen to us,

it is more useful to invite them to observe classes first, and then engage them in a conversation in which they can process their observations. Subsequently, volunteers become involved with individual teachers, and workshops may occur later on as their questions and interests evolve. Large groups can be useful for conveying information about the program and the agency and for allowing participants to exchange information and to share expectations. Former volunteers can also enhance such large group meetings by sharing their perspectives on volunteering. However, our experience has shown us that a more collaborative and effective way to introduce volunteers to the agency is in smaller numbers.

Throughout the program, in fact, individuals came to volunteer in Institute programs. A variety of desires motivated them, e.g., to assist a particular individual in a class, increase their own understandings of issues related to ESL literacy provision or to fulfill certain academic requirements or community service tasks. When there seemed to be a match between an existing need and a particular service offered, a staff person sometimes engaged the support of an individual volunteer in filling an appropriate role. Although we supported the preparation of volunteers in a group context, we also worked with individual volunteers who could provide a needed service or invited them to wait until another group assembled, if no existing need was identified at that time.

Three volunteers in the Literacy/ESL Program exemplified such situations: Jessica, Marguerite and Carla. Fran's account of their participation follows.

Jessica came to the intake interview for the Literacy/ESL Program with her elderly mother, Pamela. Pamela was not orally fluent in English at all. Jessica was the graduate of an American college. Their first language was twi, a dialect of Ghana, their country of origin. Anticipating that there would be no bilingual assistance for her mother, Jessica offered to volunteer in class during the first two months of her mother's attendance. In addition to helping her mother, she agreed to be available to facilitate a group during the initial conversation period of each class. Jessica assisted her mother in class without fostering dependence. Her commitment to her mother's needs was reflected in her attention especially to the other elderly learners in the class who also benefitted from her patient attention.

Marguerite, a middle aged graduate student, inquired about a semester long volunteering opportunity in order to further inform her ESL studies and her membership on the board of a foundation that received proposals to fund ESL projects. A learner had recently arrived for an intake interview with specific, very different needs from the learners in the current ESL literacy classes. Saphya, a Cambodian woman literate in French as her second language, had originally been resettled in France from Cambodia. Resettled in still another host country for purposes of family reunification, Saphya needed ESL literacy. It was not anticipated by literacy program staff that her transfer of literacy skills would take very long; she had an immediate need for ESL literacy for her job and a strong motivation to learn. Marguerite's familiarity with French and Saphya's openness to weekly onsite tutoring in addition to her regular class attendance made the partnership a fitting way to proceed.

Some local schools encourage volunteerism in the community as a service component of educational programs. Carla, a junior from an area high school, telephoned the Institute asking if she could assist in an ESL literacy class on a regular basis for one semester. There was an 18 year old female student enrolled in Room 1 who, because of her age and expectations, had little in common with the other significantly older learners, except for the need of education in literacy. Carla consented to be a peer tutor twice a week. She sat in class with Martha, a timid learner. They completed copying and writing tasks together. They shared stories. discussed and wrote about make-up, jewelry and clothes. When Carla's volunteer commitment necessarily came to end, due to her own part-time employment needs, Martha also terminated from the program.

In retrospect, I wonder about the advisability of working relationships in class precluding the development of a community among learners beyond individual partnerships. Janet feels that such an instance also has to do with learners' goals and motivations as well as with learning styles and preferences, and that the entire range of possible interactions suggests closer attention to that aspect of ongoing teacher research.

Another area in which we learned to strengthen our work was in the provision of follow-up and ongoing support. While we were available to people who phoned or came by with questions and concerns we weren't entirely on top of a regular system of contacting people to provide the kind of support that

might have been helpful to those volunteers who may not have had specific questions, but for whom some insightful questions on our part might have been valuable processing tools.

Volunteer education: a site case study

International House is a small not-for-profit agency whose constituents are largely temporary visitors to the area. ESL and conversation classes geared to beginning, intermediate and advanced speakers are taught there by volunteer instructors. Virtually all of their learners are literate and fairly well educated prior to their arrival at IH and come to study and seek social interaction with fellow visitors.

IH requested training for volunteer teachers in the spring of 1990. Janet visited the site prior to the workshops to get a sense of who the learners and teachers were, and how the classes ran. She met with two administrators, spoke informally with teachers and learners and sat in on classes. On the basis of her observations and the comments and questions heard during the informal meetings, she chose materials, formulated a working plan for the first session and wrote up an outline to distribute to participants.

During the two sessions, Janet worked to model a participatory mode of learning for participants and at the end of the first meeting pointed out explicitly how she had done that -- by inviting responses to open ended questions, turning questions from one participant back to the rest of the group, and generally trying to facilitate the emergence of the group's knowledge, individually and collectively. There were moments of disagreement among the participants and between Janet and the director, which were explicated. Stressing the importance of understanding rationale as well as technique, Janet tried to present more than one take on issues such as correction, curriculum, materials use and development.

Having begun to learn about the need for balance between structure and open ended questioning during the first workshop, Janet had an opportunity to assess the participants' needs and interests, and then to develop additional questions and readings for the second workshop. This process was made explicit to the participants in an attempt to demystify the learning process and to validate the individual and collective knowledge of all

concerned.

Professional development : beyond the Institute

There are several literacy providers in the Providence area. The Literacy/ESL Program focussed exclusively on literacy learning for adult non native speakers of English. Much of our learning has been useful across programs, particularly for other ESL and adult educational providers. Therefore, over the past three years we have collaborated formally and informally with Genesis Center, Dorcas Place, International House, Literacy Volunteers of America, students in ESL methodology classes at local colleges and from Brown University's Center for Public Service ESL programs, the Family Literacy Program of the Providence Public Library, the Institute for Labor Studies and Research and Providence Adult Education.

Most consistent and ongoing staff development occurred with Genesis Center staff. We began formal interaction with teachers at the Genesis Center in June of 1989, when we met to present options for staff development activities to begin the following fall. The program's principal had begun the collaborative process by meeting with Fran during the spring and had discussed technical assistance in the area of ESL/literacy that they might wish to pursue.

During our first meeting with the entire teaching staff, we introduced ourselves, downplayed our role as 'experts' and encouraged teachers' input in discussing plans for staff development for the coming academic year. Prior to the meeting we had visited classrooms at Genesis, taking note of learner interaction, materials used and the way in which the space was utilized. The observation of people, things and space was important in grounding us in the local experience of the school as well as in helping us to understand the context in which the teachers worked. Following the initial discussion with teachers, we gave them the following memo:

Since plans are underway for interaction between us in the fall, we are interested in knowing how best to serve your needs. Please indicate, in the order of your priority, workshop topics which would benefit you.

____ Getting off to a good start: "What do I do on Day 1 in September?"

____ Integrating new students into ongoing classes
____ Attending to illiterate students in the literate classroom (multilevel classes)
____ Using and expanding a theme/activity for an extended amount of time
____ Exploring approaches and activities for the ESL classroom:
e.g. language experience
photo/picture stories
scrambling, sequencing
total physical response
pair work
interview/information grids
dialog journals
realia
____ Selecting texts/materials: commercial, student-made, teacher-made
____ Other, please comment: _____

For ongoing collaboration between our program staff, please check what you would enjoy:

____ Viewing videotapes of classes with ethnically diverse participants

	in your classroom	or	in ours
___ observation	_____	or	_____
___ teaching demonstrations	___	or	_____
___ co-teaching opportunities	__	or	_____

We tallied out their priority rankings and planned the first workshop which was held in October, during a 90 minute session. Having learned from our previous involvement with volunteer teachers that some structure was needed for even a processive and participatory approach to inservice, we planned a sequenced agenda with space built into it for discussion and digression as participants' interests would dictate.

We planned to discuss our role as collaborators, give people time to use free writing as a means of surfacing their questions

and concerns about their teaching practice, process what information they would want to share with the group, and then recap those issues they'd prioritized in the spring. We also planned to introduce the notion of the teacher as researcher and to use that as a framing device for exploration of their teaching practice.

The first workshop began with introductions. Fran knew the teachers and introduced Janet to them and had them introduce themselves to her. Our focus was primarily on learning about people's educational backgrounds -- their histories of interaction with ESL learners and ESL teaching. Four teachers and their principal attended and participated in the workshop from start to finish. In subsequent workshops the principal would sometimes sit in as an observer, but did not participate regularly in the processes (discussions, free writing) in which the others were engaged.

Following introductions Fran spoke briefly about the collaborative nature of learning (as opposed to 'training') and our hopes/goals for working on teacher development with them. We all then spent ten minutes on a free write about the last hour of teaching we had each done. Participants then responded to the free write, most of them descriptively -- telling what they'd done and how they felt. One teacher recognized the "I" in the center of her writing and how her class had been teacher- directed because she was giving students new information. Another spoke about frustration of learners not all finishing everything together, at the same time. These descriptive observations led to discussion of affective issues and surfaced deeper questions and concerns, as we had hoped and expected they might.

After the discussion, Janet reviewed the preferences they'd stated in the spring for inservice focus and invited new issues to be raised. Fran spoke of the merits of documenting classes. We gave participants copies of an excerpt from *Reclaiming the classroom*[3].

"We do not need new information," Ann Berthoff argues. "We need to think about the information we have."We need, in other words, to **consider**, and to interpret the things we consider; we need constantly to ask why we are doing what we are doing, to the end that our teaching practices are informed by theory. Thus our business should be a matter of questions as much as

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3 Goswami and Stillman, (Eds.). (1987). *Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change.*

answers -- of avoiding predeterminations and the gimmicky methodologies that serve them. For Berthoff, teaching is RE-searching -- looking and looking again.

In addition to the Berthoff piece, we handed out two write-ups of literacy program classes and invited participants to respond to the write ups in terms of : ideas for continued activity with the particular classes being described; insight into who the learners might be and what they might be doing; and feedback into the plausibility of documenting classes in similar fashion themselves. With that we ended the session, and began to ask ourselves some questions. We wondered what impression the teachers had of our interaction: what would they say they'd done during the workshop if anyone asked them? We realized that we needed to structure cohesive blocks of time for the next workshop -- a full day session, at a retreat site away from the school -- in order to create explicit themes, activities and pieces of learning to fit together into some kind of whole.

That full day session revolved around very hands on activities and focussed on generating and using materials with learners. It was followed by informal and individual interaction between teachers and IIRI literacy staff. A third workshop was held in the spring and focussed on the curriculum the school has and the teachers' feelings about the curriculum. We saw some movement in teachers' views; many had moved away from a prescribed curriculum in order to meet their learners' needs more specifically. There were still concerns about working with multilevel learners, and we agreed to schedule a workshop addressing that issue for the following fall.

During the fall workshop (now a full year into our formal collaboration with the staff of Genesis Center) we saw even more evidence of a shift in assumptions and approaches among teachers. They spoke about adapting materials and generating their own; encouraging learners to help each other; eliciting themes and topics from learners, and finally, advising other teachers present (from IIRI and other programs) about materials that work.

Our final formal collaborative workshop with Genesis occurred two months later, at which time Lenore Balliro from the Adult Literacy Resource Institute offered a full day workshop on alternative assessment processes. In addition to the Genesis staff, teachers and administrators from Dorcas Place, Literacy Volunteers of America, the Institute for Labor Studies and Re-

search, the Brown Center for Public Service and other agencies also participated in Lenore's session, as well as in a half day session with Patricia Medina from Bronx Educational Services. These two workshop sessions brought together literacy practitioners who had been vaguely familiar with each other three years earlier. Through formal collaboration at various points with the Literacy/ESL program, we had come to know each agency and, we believe, had facilitated some networking among other agencies as well. Certainly, the Literacy/ESL program is not singly responsible for bringing providers together. We do feel we contributed to strengthening col-laborative interaction among providers in the area.

Professional development: management, resistance, and change

In reviewing our work with literacy practitioners -- facilitators, administrators, volunteers -- we learned about approaches that worked and didn't work. Our own assumptions regarding program models (administrative and educational) changed, as did our views on staffing, staff development and collaborative practice overall. We learned about the need for congruence across program components, as we describe below.

management

One aspect of the program that merits attention is that of program management. The management or administrative model of a program ideally reflects that of its substructures -- the classrooms or learning sites. The Literacy/ESL Program began under a traditional model: one coordinator oversaw the work of two practitioners (literacy specialists). A number of variables conspired to render this model ineffective for the program during its first six months of operation. We feel that the issue bears discussion here in that it might prove to be instructive to other literacy workers seeking to recreate or restructure their own programs or simply to challenge and alter their own assumptions about models that work.

The organizational chart is not the only piece that impacts upon program implementation; the program itself is affected by the personalities of its staff, the constraints placed upon the running of the program and other external and internal factors. Funders' expectations, needs of the agency within which the program runs, speed with which reports must be compiled -- all these factors affect the way in which a program happens on a

daily basis.

In our case, several internal and external factors ultimately mitigated against a smooth flow of events under a traditional management model. The three full time staff people were new to each other. One of the specialists had worked in the field for over ten years and was new to the agency. The other had worked within the agency for eight years and was the first of the three to be hired for the program. The coordinator had recently completed graduate work in literacy and was hired largely on the basis of her demonstrated strengths as an administrator at her previous worksite (an ESL program in another state). During the first four months everyone on staff felt tremendous pressure to perform. The program had been on the drawing board for two years prior to receiving its funding. It represented a very significant monetary grant for educational services for the agency for a single contract, and a national search had been launched in order to staff the program. Clearly, great things were expected.

Because of perceived and real pressure on the coordinator to meet deadlines, deal with an advisory committee and oversee the compiling of data for and writing of the initial needs assessment, management decisions were made and implemented in a less than participatory manner. Tensions grew between the coordinator and her staff. Eventually the coordinator withdrew from the program. We discuss this series of events because in retrospect we feel that the very lack of congruence between style of staff management and style of classroom -- learner/teacher -- interaction played a very large part in the ultimate disintegration of the staff model as it had originally been formulated.

After having interviewed several candidates to replace the coordinator, we determined that we would prefer to coordinate ourselves and to either hire a third coequal specialist or to determine those tasks needing to be done and to hire a number of part time people to do them. Ultimately this model -- hiring additional people on a short term basis -- proved the more successful for a few reasons. The strongest argument for allocating tasks among (agency) staff (who became the applicants for the part time tasks we posted) was that an initial object of the program was to do capacity building among existing agency staff. This became an effective way in which to allocate tasks and to approach inservice as something resembling an on the job learning model. One additional advantage we had was the willingness of the educational division director to assume much of the reporting work to be done, so that our administrative work, per se, did not

increase greatly after the coordinator left the program.

In terms of management structure and input, there was still work to be done in finding ways to incorporate learners more into decision making processes within the program. Learner input shaped scheduling decisions and dictated classroom content. Logistical and other constraints, however, prevented learner input in other areas, such as hiring. Like many adult learners, our students had numerous demands made upon their time and energy; additionally, we questioned the extent to which some learners view it as their responsibility to participate in non direct service aspects of the program. These issues will be explored and discussed with learners as the program continues its interaction with them (even after the initial three year period we report here).

As of this writing, our learning has grown significantly from the experience of unraveling ourselves from a traditional top-down staffing system to a more lateral and participatory manner of decision making, hiring, goal setting, program implementation, staff development and site development during the course of the program.

resistance and change

Throughout this document, we have referred explicitly to collaboration, its costs and benefits. Among the costs are the added stresses embedded in the shift from independent, isolated teaching practice to collaborative modes of teacher education and shifts from teacher to learner centered practice. For some teachers the presence of an onsite staff development team in and of itself can be threatening, and we worked very hard to deemphasize our roles as experts and to encourage our colleagues to work with us and with each other to further our learning about learning. Our ways of conducting workshops and interacting with teachers, learners and even administrators and funders underwent constant revision. We reflect upon the resistance we encountered to demystify our process and to encourage other practitioners to enter into dialog on what are often thorny topics within the parameters of their own programs.

Many of us -- native speakers and non native speakers alike -- come from very traditional educational backgrounds. Our teachers taught and we learned. For some of us, the teacher's authority was not to be questioned; others challenged that authority on a regular basis. Most of us shared a schooling tradition which

valued independent thinking and engendered a degree of competitiveness. For those of us to whom individual achievement is important, the notion of giving up control in the classroom is frightening. For some men, receiving feedback (no matter how positive) from women can be disconcerting. For anyone, trusting in methods which lack clear, quantifiable results requires some small (or large) leap of faith. The thought of being evaluated or judged in any way is not particularly comfortable. Imagine, then, the range of responses to our initial few months of working closely with classroom facilitators, and then imagine the resistance we encountered and presented ourselves. When people resisted our ideas about learner centered learning, we would find ourselves resisting *them* .

Our greatest learning came from the realization that just as we accept our learners at their points of readiness, so too must we accept our colleagues at theirs. This realization enabled us to rethink our assumptions about teacher education and, more importantly, enabled us to join teachers in real co-investigation. Having done workshops (and been in the position of being 'trainers') for a few years prior to advent of the literacy program, we felt that we were in a position to help people learn but neglected to remember our own needs as learners and our limitations as teachers. Realizing that adult education is an undervalued field and that adult educators come and go because they simply can't afford to stay led us to understand the need for ongoing education for all of us -- those who stay as well as those who enter as new arrivals to the field. A case in point -- a reexamination of resistance follows.

During the second winter of the program, literacy staff hired a former IIRI staff member to work with Room 1 and Room 6 learners, each two nights weekly. The facilitator had worked for several years as a teacher, teacher trainer and materials and curriculum developer in refugee camps in Thailand and the Philippines and had massive ESL experience. His experience, however, was largely shaped by providing training to teachers whose classes consisted of hundreds of learners, and for whom curriculum had to be, to some measure, predetermined. When he arrived at IIRI and saw the kinds of work we were doing, he questioned the wisdom of giving people stories to read, when they themselves "couldn't read anything," and needed more skills and drills. During the six months he worked with us, we saw our resistance to his notions of curriculum give way, as we were forced to confront our own assumptions in explaining them to him and in interacting with him and with our learners.

(We each shared our class with him.) Whereas we had a notion of predetermined curriculum as being 'bad', we learned why it was necessary to have a static curriculum in order to begin, at least, to work with hundreds of refugees and scores of teachers. The facilitator, for his part, came to understand how different it is to plan for twelve learners over the course of six months. We all made gains in learning by the time he left. He reconsidered the value of a teacher centered model, and in justifying our views, we clarified and rethought our assumptions about the benefits of learner centered instruction.

A model may not work for all learners or for all teachers. As we learned more about our own resistances, preferences and beliefs, we became more explicit in explaining them to potential teachers and volunteers and, of course, to learners. We saw a change in our own teachers' room -- from relatively isolated consultations among staff to frequent and ongoing dialog across program lines; we feel that we participated in an unearthing process that can continue beyond the course of our particular program. Site staff continued and greatly expanded a tradition of questioning, challenging and co-learning. This one fact validates the Literacy/ESL Program as an entity which expanded and expands access to learning and to literacy for learners and facilitators.

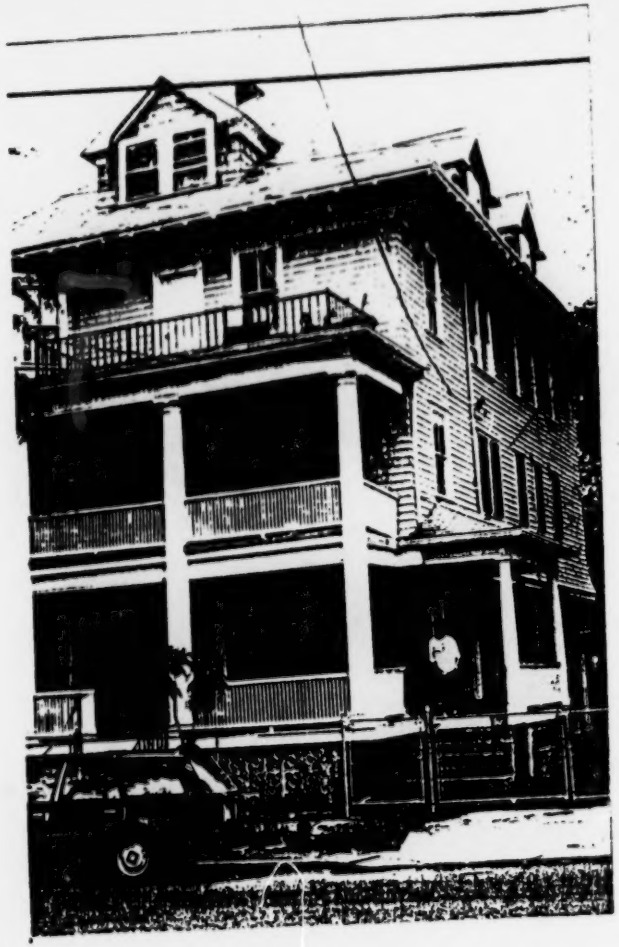
R.

How are you today? I'm happy when you come to school. How was your week-end? What did you do?

March 12-1990 I am Feel good to day. my weekend went good. I went to a park, with Dedroan my children. my children played ~~wasta~~ a lot. we passa beautiful time in the park.

I SORRY TOO TEACHER BECAUSE I DON'T COME TO SCHOOL ONE WEEK I GO TO SEE MY MOTHER

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Diana Vargas
the picture of the outside of my house my house has many Trees I Live ON the Corner of Congress

toolbox

In this section we hope to demystify the nuts and bolts of the Literacy/ESL Program by breaking out its component parts. Throughout this handbook the reader will have noticed some overlap and some redundancy. This recursiveness reflects the interconnectedness of and interrelationships within learning and teaching processes. In taking the whole apart to look at its pieces, we create sometimes arbitrary divisions; we do this here in order to enable other practitioners to consider our decisions and to see how usefully they might or might not be adopted or adapted to meet their own circumstances.

The toolbox is not a new metaphor for the variety of methods, approaches and techniques employed by language and literacy facilitators[1]. What needs to be demystified is the way in which an attentive facilitator will pull these elements together in a language/literacy learning context. Use of the tools in the tool box is dictated by who the learners are and what their goals may be. The debate about what constitutes method and/or differentiates it from approach is an old and not especially useful one. For our purposes,*method* implies a way in which something is done. *Approach* is the larger umbrella under which various methodologies may be loosely framed together. Some practitioners further distinguish the what and the how of instruction/implementation under the headings of *techniques*, which might be particular ways of doing things in the classroom to move learners towards their literacy goals.

In considering the continua of teaching practice and the assumptions implicit in the range of approaches teachers employ, it seems important to ask what teaching is and maybe what it isn't. Maybe teaching **isn't** more than it is. Maybe teaching is a process of learning from: at times, people are self-taught, at other times they learn from others, constructing knowledge socially. Frameworks have been suggested for

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[1]Many discussions about literacy learning have used tools as an analogy to literacy; Lev Vygotsky, among many others, has theorized extensively on tools and learning. Lalida Ramdas also addresses political implications of literacy as tool in *Convergence*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, Women and literacy: a quest for justice, 1990.

examining 'good' practice, as distinguished from 'bad', top-down or bottom up, competency-based or participatory, skill centered or meaning based, and on. Each paradigm presents itself or more accurately, proponents of each paradigm present their model as the single means by which learning might be achieved. Perhaps I overstate the case, for effect. Clearly, there is no one sanctioned method by which learning occurs, and binary oppositions disregard the multiple shades of grey inherent in the range of teaching approaches. Contingent factors form an overlay that one cannot simply feed into some equation of that which is necessary for learning to occur.

What are these factors? Learners': age, gender, previous educational experience, health and mental health, vision, hearing, learning style, expectations, orientation (visual, aural, tactile), immediate life situations, past/recent changes/transitions. Add to these learner-based factors the same information for teachers, plus ideology, pedagogical bent and training. Now factor in the consideration that each class will be peopled by learners whose backgrounds, learning styles, preferences, etc., will vary widely, and then insist that one teaching approach is satisfactory for all. One size will not fill all; shooting for the middle, conventional wisdom once upon a time, seems tantamount to shooting at one's own foot.

Teaching practice is informed not only by an understanding of the complexities of the individual participants involved in the learning process, but also by the exponentially different processes that emerge through the interaction of learners with each other and with their teacher or facilitator. The construing of knowledge in a group/social setting is a powerful thing -- one which can be hoped for, but seldom truly planned for in any precise way. A willing teacher, then, realizes that her role is that of facilitator as she attempts to guide learners to their own knowledge, sharing that knowledge with that of others and finally moving towards advancement of knowing for all.

In attempting to guide learners towards their own knowledge, we have undergone some subtle and not so subtle changes in approach during the three years' time since the Literacy/ESL Program began at IIRI. Where we had chosen originally not to pursue native language literacy, we have seen learners use their native languages in many ways to access literacy in English and to find their voices in their native language. Although not particularly fluent in our learners' languages, we have seen them use those languages with each other and in writings to us

for clarification, for expression, for practice and for communication. We cannot claim to provide instruction in native language literacy. We have learned that learners can and do determine ways in which they need to learn, and for some this includes using the native language -- as a means of transliteration or translation, as a means through which to approach writing in English.

Another change that has occurred over the three years has been the embracing of learners' families within the classrooms. Where we began with a policy precluding children's presence in the classroom (no insurance, no room, too noisy), learners brought children --both small youngsters and adult children -- for numerous reasons: because childcare was impossible, because children acted as literacy brokers, because children wanted to help their parents and others in the literacy classes. Again, we would mislead the reader in stating that ours was a family literacy program. What it was, was a program committed to meeting the needs of the learners. For many learners meeting those needs was greatly facilitated by accepting and encouraging the presence of their valued others who contributed not only to their family members' learning, but frequently to the overall learning of the entire group.

Raúl Añorve of California Literacy problematizes the concept of knowledge and the value of learning to form questions. Knowledge viewed as an entity becomes something that can be grasped, had, owned. In seeing literacy and literacies on a continuum (or continua), knowledge is located at various points along the ways, and is something that everyone possesses. We know of and know about different things. Everybody knows something, nobody knows nothing. In a cooperative learning model the whole is often larger than the sum of its parts. Learners may come to value what they know, as this knowledge is valued by other learners working toward achieving common ends.

This section addresses the following aspects of practice: criteria and intake, curriculum, approaches and activities, materials and evaluation. **Materials** are perhaps easiest to define, per se. Pencils, papers, newsprint, chalk, erasers are the most important physical materials through which Materials might evolve. Learners' writing becomes learners' reading material. Additional authentic materials include published texts, through which some learners might feel their education is being validated and

legitimized; print realia and environmental print are discussed as well. **Curriculum** as we have come to define it is a process and develops processively. Curriculum content is derived from learners' needs, interests, concerns and goals. Learners' abilities further dictate the extent to which one might focus on academic reading or document literacy. **Criteria, intake and evaluation** have all benefited from our study of the work of numerous literacy practitioners in the US and abroad and reflect our beliefs in the primacy of supportive learning environments and the inseparability of learners' goals from evaluation of learners' progress. We hope the reader will come away with his/her own questions, and possibly with a few new tools with which to seek out answers.

Criteria and intake

Who are the learners ?
How does a learner centered program include the learner in the initial assessment process in a non- threatening manner?
How do we assess learners' abilities upon entry to the program -- affirming their abilities and learning more about their needs and goals?

The literacy/ESL program was designed to meet the needs of non native speakers of English who:

- -- have had four or fewer years of schooling in the native country
- -- speak a language which is encoded in a non-Roman alphabet
- -- lack literacy in their native language and/or in English
- -- make little or no progress in mainstream ESL classes for reasons associated with literacy.

The intake process was initially based largely upon the work of Susan Lytle and her colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania who are most concerned with offering adults the opportunity to work from strengths and from what they do know, rather than to assess new learners on the basis of perceived weakness or deficit. The assumption behind much of the work of Lytle et al. is that many adult learners have had little or no opportunity to pursue literacy learning, or that previous attempts at such learning have been negative, thereby causing learners to hesitate and approach a new learning situation with caution.

In adding to and adapting Lytle's work, we have also looked at work done at the Cambridge Community Learning Center, as well as at numerous standardized assessment instruments, such as the HELP and BEST [2] tests. The latter is too difficult, assumes an ability to interact at least on some level with print, and appears to be a test more of comprehension than of reading ability, per se. The HELP is more of an ESL test and as such provides little information of any use about learners' abilities to interact with print. Assessment sequences developed in Australia are more in keeping with our approach, but are too time consuming for an intake process.

Because we view assessment as an ongoing entity, and because we want learners to have a comfortable first encounter with the program and its staff, the intake process is deliberately brief. (As learners progress within the program, the evaluation grid is used to denote their ongoing strides.) Our work has benefited from that of the Cambridge Community Learning Center, through input from Lenore Balliro of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute and through formal and informal interaction with practitioners nationally and internationally through workshops, conferences and exchanges of materials.

Subsequently, the pages that follow are used as the baseline for assessing new learners. At any stage, if a learner has difficulty with a task and/or appears uncomfortable with that task, the staff person doing the intake will use her discretion as to whether or not to continue with the process or to terminate the intake interview by inviting the learner to begin classes.

Occasionally, such overcautiousness has led us to admit learners who were far more capable readers and/or writers than we would have guessed; however, it appears that we prefer to err on the side of learner comfort. A learner can always be moved up to a more advanced class; someone who has had a negative or intimidating experience at an intake interview may be less willing to join any class at all. There is much to be said on either side of the argument, and as we continue to work with learners, we hope to continue to learn about better ways in which to assess their abilities initially, and to invite them into active participation in the assessment process as well.

Intake / Placement Procedures

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[2] The BEST test is available through Prentice Hall Regents, and the HELP test through Alemany Publishers (now a part of Prentice Hall).

Recognizing the diversity of learners' needs and goals in literacy, a staff member of the Literacy/ESL Program utilizes (at an initial interview) intake materials that assist in collecting accurate information with which to determine both the appropriate content and context for advancing a prospective participant's learning.

The forms to collect data offer the learner the opportunity to demonstrate her/his ability to interact with print and offer the educator the means to observe the learner's familiarity or unfamiliarity with reading and writing in English. This form, on a half-sheet of 8 and 1/2 by 11 inch paper is given to the learner.

NAME

_____

ADDRESS

_____

number street apartment

_____

city state zip code

TELEPHONE

_____

The print activity with which learners interact at intake includes:

1. Simple data collecting words with enlarged print, easily readable by new learners, followed by the appropriate underline on which to respond (as above).

2. Samples of some environmental print for learners to recognize or describe; e.g. a photo of a Coke bottle, a STOP sign, a NO SMOKING sign.

3. A copied photo with appropriate room on the paper either to label or to describe it.

4. Some brief authentic reading passages of different levels: some illustrated, some not, some printed, some hand-lettered, some written in script; various kinds of print, such as a reading passage, an application, a calendar, from which learners select that which they wish to read.

5. The open-ended opportunity to say, read or write anything else they want.

6. Brief questions with which the interviewer (or someone with bilingual capability assisting her/him) elicits appropriate contextual information from the interviewee, including goals in literacy (see intake form, below).

Initial Assessment : off-site literacy groups, and/or when there isn't time to do a complete initial assessment

An intake interview with each participant is not always possible at literacy group sites. Often participants all arrive at the same time at an advertised class. The need to start instruction immediately may preclude the practitioner's ability to conduct a private intake interview of each participant. In such a situation the initial assessment of each learner's needs necessarily occurs through the practitioner's observations within the context of the class. Sometimes the structure of a program (allowing for open-entry classes) necessitates at least a preliminary assessment of a new learner at a particular session of an ongoing class.

The following suggestions might assist the teacher/facilitator in focussing the first class session of a particular program or a particular session of an ongoing class wherein there needs to be incorporation and/or assessment of a new participant. There are a few, although perhaps only a few, safe assumptions about all learners that might underlie some initial choices that a facilitator makes about content and context of a class with many unknowns:

1. Each person has a name. Beginning with learners' names -- hearing each person say her/his, inviting her/him to spell and perhaps write it down on a blackboard or other visible place -- provides an important starting point for a class and a way for the

facilitator to assess each learner's oral fluency and familiarity with print.

2. Language is a social process. A participatory class capitalizes on participants' natural desires to communicate.

3. When people look at a meaningful visual image together, that common experience usually leads to conversation.

When a teacher/facilitator is uncertain about the level of learners' literacies, the use of a visual with potential meaning for all learners can usually help to start the communication of the class, e.g. a picture of the site or any picture produced by learners (using a Polaroid camera) about which they want to talk/read/write.

Activities around names and relevant images usually make good starters and means by which to assess current learning levels.

Intake : Literacy / ESL -- see pages 109-110.

Another facet of initial and ongoing assessment entails explicit attention to the questions below. Some of these questions are asked during the intake interview; others may be asked directly within ongoing classroom sessions. The answers to yet other questions may emerge from interaction among learners as they become more familiar and comfortable with the classroom setting and with each other. All of the information we glean about and from our learners can help to inform our practice, by sensitizing us to issues and concerns of importance to learners; such sensitivity can be useful in guiding our decisions about content to pursue or not pursue within the learning environment.

other questions to consider about learners and their interaction with literacy

background -- are learners from rural or urban setting? Was an extended amount of time spent in transit or in refugee camps?

literate environment -- is there evidence of print in the home? What is the interaction around school/literacy among household members?

Intake : Literacy / ESL

Registration date _____

Name

Last First

Address

---

street city zip

Telephone _____ ___ m ___ f dob _____

Country of origin _____ doe: US _____

Native language _____ Race/ethnicity _____

Previous education, country of origin

Previous education, US

Household: Head _____ # people _____

Previous employment

Current employment

Welfare: _____ Annual income : _____

handicap:

health:

childcare:

transportation:

comments:

Began _____ Program/level _____ teacher

intake, page 2

Name _____

please tell me about:

speaking English at home _____

at work _____

reading English

---

reading native language

---

writing English

---

writing native language

Why do you want to study?

Does anyone in your household study? _____

Who speaks English in your family? _____

Does anyone help you speak/read/write English? _____

When do you have problems with English?

When is it easier to speak English?

What do you like to do? What are you good at?_____

What do you teach/help other people to do? _____

family roles
When young, who was responsible for negotiating literacy activity, if any, in the country of origin?
As parents/older people: who is responsible for such negotiations now?
Re: children -- what are learners' aspirations for their children?
What are their children's' aspirations for themselves?
What are the social constructs of family? What are immediate needs? long range goals?
Who is in the household? _____ children _____ spouse, _____ significant other _____ other family members _____ others (friends, children of friends, roommates, etc.)

school
What about school in native country?
What do learners remember about school? (hours, environment, roles of teachers and students, etc. ?)
Have they attended school locally or elsewhere in the US?

learning
What learning environments work for learners? (e.g. Do they like to learn/study in the kitchen, living room, etc. ?)
What about learning styles?
What are learners' barriers, worries, fears about school?
How do they use media -- books, tapes, TV, magazines, circulars, newspapers? What media are in the house?
What supplies are in the house?

goals
What are learners' goals? Why do they want to learn?

curriculum

overview / introduction

The Literacy/ESL Program had as one of its mandates the development of a curriculum for literacy instruction for adult non-native speakers of English. In the course of the program, we have come to avoid words such as 'instruction' or the concept that *a* curriculum can or should exist to fit the needs of a monolithic entity known as 'learners'. Further, it is questionable whether or not a person can actually teach something to

another person, or as one learner once stated, it's more a matter of people "helping [each other] to learn".

curriculum and the learner

Literacy/ESL Program staff examined several existing curricula -- the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) Curriculum, the Tacoma House volunteer tutor curriculum, the Literacy Volunteers of America curriculum, the Center for Literacy Basic Literacy Tutor Handbook, the English Language Center of IIRI curriculum and competency-based literacy curricula from the Northwest Educational Cooperative (Illinois), the Cambodian Literacy Project Curriculum[3], California adult literacy programs, and other book-based curricula -- in order to gain a sense of what was 'out there' in the field, and to see what, if anything, might be adaptable or useful to learners in our program.

Our study of various curricula and program designs helped us understand ways in which literacy instruction has evolved since the mid to late 70's, when many Southeast Asian refugees first arrived with little or no previous education and/or no literacy in their native languages. ESL providers were ill equipped to provide appropriate instruction; existing materials were of little to no use for their new learners. These materials assumed learners' ability to interact with print and, further, their content was irrelevant to refugees'/new arrivals' lives and needs. Hence a variety of methodologies and materials was developed in order to facilitate literacy learning within the context of survival English and other competency based curricula.

Over the course of the ten years that followed, competency-based curricula were field tested during the MELT project (in which IIRI participated as one of seven field test sites nationally) and from which the MELT Curriculum emerged[4]. As funding mandates conflated education and employment outcomes in the ensuing years (1985 and on), curricula reflected a shift towards job readiness and economic self-sufficiency; skills and competencies around the workplace were 'taught'.

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[3] (1988), by Linda Mrowicki and Mel Shaw; the Cambodian Association of Illinois with the Northwest Educational Cooperative, funded through the Secretary of State's Literacy Grant Program, Chicago, IL.

[4] The MELT Project - Mainstream English Language Training -- was funded through the Office of Refugee Resettlement and produced a competency-based curriculum, tests of oral and literacy abilities and several training programs and documents.

Over the course of the ten years that followed, competency-based curricula were field tested during the MELT project (in which IIRI participated as one of seven field test sites nationally) and from which the MELT Curriculum emerged[4]. As funding mandates conflated education and employment outcomes in the ensuing years (1985 and on), curricula reflected a shift towards job readiness and economic self-sufficiency; skills and competencies around the workplace were 'taught'.

Concurrently, literacy workers in England, Canada and Australia came to an increasingly clear understanding of the primacy of the learner in the learning process. The work of Paolo Freire and other liberatory educators was adapted most notably for ESL practitioners by Nina Wallerstein, whose book, *Language and culture in conflict*, offered the first 'sanctioned' (read: published) alternative curriculum*guide*.

In the ensuing years many US literacy practitioners have embraced a learner-centered approach to literacy learning and have laid down their curricula. Some engage in retroactive curriculum development -- working to construct curricula from their own documentation of lessons, from which themes, content and approach emerge and are described after classes have been held. Curriculum is constructed processively; it is dynamic rather than static.

Literacy/ESL Program staff value the importance of nurturing a sense of community among learners so that their concerns can be clearly voiced and shared and subsequent language and literacy work can be developed around these issues and concerns. Wallerstein (1984) describes community literacy as "an educational process which takes curriculum from community and student needs and, through dialogue and co-education, suggests changes back to the community" (p. 10). This process is most commonly known as one of problem posing (as opposed to problem solving). How does Wallerstein's process (and that of many participatory educators) help the many program practitioners who are compelled to follow prescribed curricula? Such curricula might use **topics** as organizing devices (usually these topics fall under the umbrella of life skills) and 'teach' literacy within the context of personal information, shopping, transportation, health, etc. In a learner centered classroom topics are generated by learners. The process of dialogue and co-education occurs jointly among learners and facilitator[s]; a problem-posing approach is implemented around topics of interest and importance to learners.

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[4] The MELT Project - Mainstream English Language Training -- was funded through the Office of Refugee Resettlement and produced a competency-based curriculum, tests of oral and literacy abilities and several training programs and documents.

Cross topics (topics which are applicable to a number of situations and fall under numerous headings) such as time, money or clarification, can be taught separately and/or in contexts such as banking, transportation or work. Within the scope of ESL/ literacy, a cross topic such as *time* might appear within numeracy work, within document reading and writing, as well as within a discussion of work, eating, sleeping and/or leisure habits. A cross topic, as such, represents language/ literacy used or needed in more than one specific context. Housing, for example -- a specific topic -- might embrace the cross topics of seeking clarification (the rent is how much?); numeracy ($500); document literacy (lease, house/building rules) and money (check? cash? money order?). Participatory educators might suggest that one connect the mandated topics to the wider framework of a problem-posing approach in order to connect learners' knowledge and experience to the topics (or grammatical items, etc.) at hand.

Given the multiple needs of learners and the often restrictive focus of curriculum-as-entity, we have come to view lesson planning and curriculum development as interrelated, and we view this conflation from the lens of reflection upon practice. Having previously worked in other programs under both mandated and less restrictive curriculum models, we have come to believe that a curriculum **cannot** be predetermined. We've come to equate curriculum with learning process. The facilitator guides learners through various language and literacy events and activities derived from learner-generated content. Therefore, we suggest a guide to developing and expanding the process of organizing a body of study to which learners actively and consistently contribute, and with which they interact.

curriculum and teacher education

Curriculum and implementation are intricately connected to teacher education, to action research and especially to learners' development. As teachers reflect upon and increase their own learning about their practice, they may systematize that learning through the inquiry process of action research. Questions around learners' progress or lack thereof may inform that research; curriculum -- the body of study -- permeates the interactions of learners and learners, and learners and facilitators with the topics and materials at hand. As teachers learn more about what works and what doesn't work with learners, they may come to alter their interaction with the curriculum. They may: renegotiate the curriculum with their colleagues; negotiate a new [approach to] curriculum with learners; and/or feel more able to amend the curriculum in order to meet learners' needs more effectively. Program components -- assessment, ongoing

evaluation, materials and curriculum development, etc. -- are interconnected. As facilitators rethink their relationships to learners and curriculum, it follows that a process of rethinking other aspects of the program will evolve. As literacy practitioners gain awareness of the needs of their learners, they tend to work toward developing greater congruence within all aspects of the educational program. Learning about literacy practice crosses component boundaries.

Given the methods and approaches through which literacy program classes have been facilitated within IIRI and its satellite sites, the curriculum guide reflects a processive, learner centered approach to curriculum and materials development. It can be viewed from the constructs of **recurrent events** (conversations, dialog journal writing, language experience activity) through which **content** (themes and topics) emerge.

recurrent events

Recurrent events are occasions during which learners regularly generate writing, which can later be expanded into different kinds of reading materials, which might then be further expanded or adapted into more reading and writing matter. Learner activity, needs and concerns dictate content. These organizational strands provide a working framework within which the content finds structure -- a starting point from which materials development, reading and writing activity evolve and expand. Recurrent events include dialog journal writing, generating the class News and developing language experience stories, generated at the beginning of class. Learners relate events/information occurring prior to class that day (which often overlap with themes and topics). Additionally, smaller, repetitive events, such as the writing of the date or the weather report ("Today it's cold") at the beginning of class, serve to encourage learners to take preliminary steps towards independent writing and reading within a relatively controlled (i.e., limited) range of vocabulary and within a safe and supportive learning environment.

themes and topics

Facilitators in the Literacy/ESL Program have organized literacy activity around themes and topics according to learners' needs, interests and concerns. These themes and topics are generally elicited during the beginning of any class session. Conversations -- authentic speech events among all participants -- frequently surface questions or issues that learners wish to

discuss or to know more about. The facilitator generally invites learners to share whatever they might know about a topic at hand and often engages learners in some writing about that topic. Through the use of language experience, the collective knowledge is organized into a story or paragraph from which the first reading material on that topic is generated. Depending on the extent of learners' interest in the topic and/or the availability of other appropriate/relevant materials, 'authentic' texts and/or further reading materials may be used to extend or expand the topic at hand. Additionally, the facilitator will generally type up the class writing and reproduce and distribute it the following day in order to provide additional interaction with the learner-generated writing, as well as to validate the learners' contribution to the body of reading material used by the group. Further, the facilitator often adds open ended questions to the sheet on which a writing appears, thereby extending learners' interaction with both content and additional writing and reading.

Curriculum emerged from the processes described and implied above and delineated more explicitly below. Curriculum became graspable retroactively; as we discussed our processes of teaching and learning, those things we actually did in the classroom -- approaches, techniques, and content -- became things we could manipulate, explore and try to organize. Our work was something we could reflect upon and talk about. Arguably, we were able to devise such a melding of curriculum as content and curriculum as process because of our previous experience as ESL facilitators. In order to demystify the process and yet remain non-prescriptive, we have outlined the guide precisely for those teachers who may be new to the field and/or new to a learner centered approach to literacy learning.

Current plans for the literacy program are tentative. Funding for much of the technical assistance and documentation work will end in February of 1991. Funds have been secured, however, for additional class time -- for increasing direct service. It is anticipated that the basic approach to curriculum will continue to evolve. We view ourselves as colearners in an ever-fluid process; the approach -- one of attentive listening and transformation of learners' themes into literacy activity -- seems to be moving in a positive direction.

the curriculum guide

In compiling the work done within the literacy program, we have asked ourselves: How does one transform or translate a learner-centered approach into a curriculum document? How does curriculum reflect that approach? How do we challenge the static notion of curriculum as a fixed prescriptive body of topics and competencies in such a way as to be useful to new teachers as well as to teachers who have experienced their own classes in a more directive manner? We hope to replace the 'standard' curriculum with a process and a document of process that is more suggestive to the reader of ways to consider approaching the learning experience.

recurrent events

the News

Generating the class News, a one page compilation of learners' contributions, written weekly is an organizing component of the curriculum and materials development processes.

Rationale: The process of generating and reading class news enables learners to share information about matters of interest and/or importance to them and builds community through the sharing of such information. Text is embedded in a shared and common context and facilitates the development of reading and writing skills at a variety and range of levels. As learners gain familiarity with the process of generating the news, they have the option of taking on 'leadership' writing roles as other learners dictate information which they (as scribes) can encode. This process encourages students to access each other in ascertaining correct spelling, seeking clarification, asking questions, etc. Additionally, the use of learners' names (and experiences) increases their awareness of each other, validates their experiences and increases reading/writing abilities overall.

Materials: large newsprint, markers (or blackboard and chalk).

Procedure: Generating the news. The teacher, initially, asks learners what 'news' items they have to contribute. This process follows the language experience approach, in that the teacher transcribes the events described by learners using the learners' own words. Reading, rereading and interactive activities can follow (e.g., circle the 'b' words, underline _____, etc.). After all the news has been assembled, the teacher (or if time/ logistics permit, a learner) types the news into a format (see appendix). The more the format assumes and maintains some regularity, the greater the chances that learners will engage in predictive reading patterns; that is, they learn to scan for the

weather report, find the calendar in the upper right hand corner, look for each others' name in **bold, underlined** type face at the beginning of each news item, etc. The use of regular and predictable features also feeds into the reading of 'real' newspapers, which have predictable formats. As learners gain facility with generating the news, they may assume more responsibility for generating and transcribing news independently (without a facilitator). (See page 61 for a brief description of learners interacting independently with the news.) At more advanced levels, and as time and resources permit, they can also become engaged in the production process -- typing, laying out, xeroxing, etc. Graphics, such as a small calendar or photos, may be added as appropriate.

Note: On 'slow' news days teachers may wish to add a weather report, a word count (How many times did you read '**to**' in today's news? Please circle **to**.), a cloze exercise (today is _____/ yesterday was _____/ tomorrow will be _____), an information seeking exercise (Who's at school today? How many men are in the room?) or some writing activity (This week-end, I want to _____) in order to increase learners' interaction with the paper and with each other.

Procedure: Using the news: The news can be read and processed in a variety of ways. Students may read silently or aloud to each other in small groups or aloud all together. Collaboratively or individually, students complete interactive activities. The teacher may wish to ask who wants to read (as a general invitation) and/or ask a particular student if s/he wants to read her/his story. Further exercises can be adapted for classroom use in ways similar to those employed in adapting materials from other texts. Additionally, learners may wish to circulate their news to other groups within the school, who in turn may exchange copies of their own news as well.

Dialog journals

Weekly writing in the dialog journal is another constant in the classroom/ curriculum/ materials triad which encourages both individual and collaborative interaction with reading and writing.

Rationale: Dialog journal writing provides a forum for student-teacher, student-student written interaction and communication in a non-threatening, individualized manner. Learners are invited to write to their teacher, working from their own level of ability. Beginning learners might be asked to write one or two

sentences about how they're feeling on a particular day. More advanced students might be invited to write 3-5 sentences about their weekend, their job, their family, etc. The teacher then responds to the writing by either posing additional questions, reflecting upon content and contributing her own information or offering sympathy, congratulations, etc. Explicit corrections are *not* made within or on the learners' actual writing, but may be modeled in the teachers' responses. (For example, if a learner reports:"Yesterday I have some time, go went downtown to shopping", a teacher may respond with, "I'm glad you had time to go shopping. When you went shopping, did your children go with you?") Some errors will not quickly change with or without explicit correction; the point of this exercise is to encourage learners to try to write, and to write and read for meaning and for communication. As time passes, learners see their entries grow in length and often see improvements in their own writing as well.

Building up to the journal:
The writing process can be intimidating to a non native speaker. In order to demystify writing to some extent, it may be useful to consider the following:
-- learners' uses of reading and writing on a daily basis;
-- kinds of reading and writing tasks in which learners engage [time cards, shopping lists, letters to family, school writing, bills, etc.];
-- ways in which to work from the whole (a written communication) to its parts (ideas, words, sentences, etc.).

To begin to engage learners in the reading/writing interaction, consider:
-- using the blackboard or other regularly designated area to post a question, statement, or simple written communication every day, to which learners can respond orally, initially, and possibly later in writing. Examples include: 1)pocket or post-it charts on which days of the week can be manipulated, students can be counted (__ men, __ women, __ people); 2) space (on the blackboard) for the date, a weather report or other daily information to be written, current events posted, etc.
-- having learners exchange simple written questions with each other at regular intervals (weekly, every two days), depend-pending on their level and/or interest.

Possible approaches to consider in beginning the journal process:
-- focus on a specific topic, such as family, work, housing situations

-- free writing
-- question/answer format

Some people use the journal as a forum to increase communication between themselves and their learners and focus on the meaning communicated in the writings. Others respond to learners' requests for correction. Some possible ways of correcting journal entries without inhibiting free communication include:
-- modeling correct usage in teacher's response;
-- underlining problem areas and asking students to consider what the problems might be [verb tense, agreement, or spelling, etc.];
-- using one side of the notebook only for writing and using the facing page for corrections;
-- taking note of students' problem areas and addressing those separately within and as part of the general content of the class. In working out ways to individualize students' work, reading/writing problems that surface in the journal may facilitate organization of appropriate activities for individual, pair or small group work.

<u>themes and topics</u>

The themes listed below may or may not be of interest to learners. Attention to their concerns, elicited during a few minutes or more of (warm up) conversation at the beginning of the class session, may reveal particular questions, concerns or interests.

Gary Pharness suggests that themes tend to follow in a similar pattern among learners universally.[5] The progression of topics seems to form an outwardly growing concentric circle or perhaps a continuum of topics beginning from the learner him or herself and growing outward to family, neighborhood, classroom, community, workplace, etc. What follows are some typical and/or predictable topics and possible questions to ask or directions to pursue. <u>In every instance, a good place to start is with the learners:</u> what knowledge and experience do they have of the topic at hand? What do they need to learn? What can they tell each other? How can they get information they don't have? What action might they want to take in pursuing information or changing a negative situation?

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[5] MLA: Responsibilities for Literacy, Pittsburgh, September, 1990.

The suggested lesson plans that follow are perhaps contradictory, in that in and of themselves they, too, could be viewed as just another set of lists of skills and competencies. The intention here, however, is to address other teachers and readers, and to invite them to find for themselves a comfortable place from which to depart. Some readers will gravitate toward the list, and perhaps it will expand the way in which they interact with competencies and learners. For others, the process may seem too prescriptive or may provide a different twist on familiar material. It seems that what's most important here is not answers, but rather the ongoing formulation of questions.

The list of brainstormed ideas and questions that appears here may or may not be of use to your particular learners. The process of creating and asking their own questions is central (integral to and inseparable from) the entire process through which curriculum does finally, in retrospect, emerge. Too much of schooling is about other people identifying problems and then asking learners to solve them. For adult learners, especially, it is critical to facilitate their identification of issues of importance.[6]

family / leisure

Learners frequently bring photographs of family members, events or trips to school to share with classmates. Learners talk about the photos. Initially, the facilitator might guide the discussion by posing questions and by trying to elicit information from the learner who's brought the photos in. As time goes by and learners come to know each other, they themselves will take on more of the interaction. From the discussion language experience approach (LEA) writing develops. Again, the facilitator might initially model ways in which to shape the discussion into writing, and as learners gain confidence they will begin acting as scribes for each other -- transferring oral to written language. Additionally, the facilitator might bring in magazine or other photos/illustrations depicting a variety of families engaged in different activities and might invite comment, questions, contrast and comparison between and among learners' notions of family and those depicted in the visual images.

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6 "Textbooks and tests do not, with rare exceptions, ask students to identify problems; instead, they ask students to *solve* problems already identified and stated by others." Heath, in Lunsford, Moglen and Slevin (eds.). (1990). *The right to literacy*. p. 293.

Generative questions can be elicited around the notion of family itself, including what a family is; how family expectations affect learners' lives; who might be considered to be a family member; the roles of significant others, community people, friends and neighbors in learners' lives.

useful texts / materials	
Voices	photos of learners' families
Starting to Read,	
Personal Stories	
Double Action Picture Cards	
In Print	
Picture Stories	
Language and Culture in Conflict	

house / home

Where are learners living? Do they want to make a map of the routes from their homes to the class site? Who rents? Who owns a home? How did they find their current living spaces? What can learners tell each other about homeowning and renting? What problems have they had that came about through lack of familiarity with the culture and customary ways of doing things? What problems or misunderstandings might have arisen through linguistic difficulties? Who in the group might be able to advise others about a particular aspect of housing as a result of her or his own previous experience? Might learners want to discuss, write and/or read about: moving -- changing utilities, borrowing/renting a truck or van; activities in the home -- who does what? (overlap with family/roles); furniture -- new, used (may overlap or connect with shopping); problems with the landlord/repairs; neighborhood; rent/mortgage and/or a comparison and contrast of home in US and native countries? What about homelessness? Why are people homeless? Who are the homeless? What has the US government done to help? What would happen to poor or homeless people in learners' countries of origin?

useful texts / materials
photos of learners' homes/ magazine photos
community environmental print (for sale, for rent, newspaper notices)
Starting to Read

Language and Culture in Conflict
In Print
Look Again Pictures for Language Development and Life Skills

cars and transportation

How do learners get to school? Is driving a car in this country very different than in learners' countries of origin? What about public transportation? Are there rules of conduct (such as not eating, spitting, smoking) on public buses in their countries? Do people commonly hitchhike? Are symbols and road signs used in the same manner in other parts of the world? What about parking bans, parking meters, alternate side/ overnight parking? Might learners want to discuss/read/write about obtaining learning permits and drivers' licenses; driving lessons or rules of the road ? Do they want to know about buying a car: new? used? mileage? Does it need body work, is it able to pass inspection? Do they want to discuss: insurance; accidents/ problems? What about public transportation -- costs, availa-bility, convenience, schedules?

<u>useful texts / materials</u>

Lifeskills 1
<u>LEA</u>
road signs/ graphics
drivers' manuals
newspapers and magazines (photos, buy/sell ads)
Look Again Pictures for Language Development and Life Skills

work

Who is employed? Who are the learners? Is it likely that among a group of elderly widows that employment will be an issue? In a group where some people are gainfully employed and others are not, is it important to validate the worth of work within the home? Are learners being sent to the program as part of a mandatory state assistance program? Have they worked before? Have they any interest in working in this country? Changing jobs? What are the cultural attitudes among learners vis a vis work? Are there issues with documentation and 'legality'? Are people exploited in their places of work? What's minimum wage and who earns it [what kinds of work are paid in what ways]? What is learners' interest in employment and contrasts between work in the US and in their native countries? Do they want to learn more about salaries, benefits, upgrading?

What about being laid off or being fired? How do people deal with conflict at the workplace? Do learners want to discuss and write about positive and negative aspects of their jobs, or jobs they might like to have?

useful texts / materials

LEA
pay stubs
want ads
application forms social security cards
proof of authorization to work
print realia/information from the worksite
Let's Work Safely
Picture Stories
In Print
Voices

family: intergenerational issues / conflict
gender: changes in roles / expectations

With whom do learners live? Who comprises their households? Is 'family' a notion of only blood relations, or are friends, elder members of a household or others thought of as uncles, aunts, or brothers or sisters? Are there absent or missing family members? What about the ways in which American families change and grow? What are learners' views of appropriate forms of childcare provision? Who takes care of whose children? Are changes (e.g. older children leaving the home to live alone) congruent with learners' notions of how families/ households change and evolve? What about interest in kinship terms or roles and expectations of spouses and/or partners? Do learners want to compare and contrast marriage ceremonies or important family events in their countries and in the US? What about the differences or similarities among learners' family structures?

useful texts / materials

In Print
Language and Culture in Conflict
Picture Stories
Personal Stories

conclusion

Finally, none of these suggestions or questions will be of any use at all if they are asked or considered in isolation from learners' goals and reasons for wanting to study. Curriculum as process is interconnected to curriculum as manifestation of learners' needs and interests. As we continue our work with non native speakers of English, we strive to find better means through which to include their explicit participation in the development of curriculum, in assessing their own progress and in determining that which is actually studied within the learning community.

Yesterday, we wrote about the people in room 6.

People in room 6 comes from different countries.

Arthur comes from the Azores.
Olindo comes from the Dominican Republic.
Geraldo comes from the Dominican Republic.
Apache comes from Puerto Rico.
Saroueth comes from Cambodia.
Kuong comes from Cambodia.

Harpain comes from INDONESIA.
Jimmy comes from Haiti.
Ny and Chay come from CAMBODIA.
Savan comes from CAMBODIA.
So Ting comes from MACAU CHINA.

1. Where do you come from?
I come Puerto Rico

2. Where do you live now?
I Live Pewtucket

3. When did you come to Providence?
I come IN 1989

4. How many people come from Cambodia?
5 people come from Cambodia

5. How many people come from Macau?
1 person come FROM MACAU

6. How many people come from Puerto Rico?
1 person come From Puerto RICO

7. How many people come from the Azores?
1 person come From AZORES

8. How many people come from the Dominican Republic?
2 person come From Dominican

evaluation

Documentation of ongoing assessment and evaluation of learner progress evolved as a process during the course of the program. An initial search for a standardized literacy test yielded nothing of use, nor could we find a format for recording learner gains. We began asking ourselves what it was we were trying to measure, and gradually developed means by which to measure them. Lenore Balliro and Bob Mason of our advisory committee offered suggestions when we showed them an early version of the evaulation grid we developed after the first six months. Other practitioners gave us input and Linda Mrowicki of the Northwest Educational Cooperative suggested the addition of an entry for document-ing progress after the first month of study.

The learner evaluation grid was developed as a means toward describing learner progress within the Program. The grid is one piece of a comprehensive learner assessment process, and comprises a tangible piece of a holistic approach to action research into how learners learn and ways in which that learning can be documented. In addition to the grid, learners' folders contain writing samples, ongoing narrative and anecdotal reports and other information pertinent to learners in the program. Additionally video tape was used as a means of observing progress and process over time.

The grid was distributed to programs around the country, and many practitioners offered useful suggestions for adaptation. Viewed as a working document, it continues to change as it is adapted by others. The development of the grid is described in the section on action research. The questions asked in developing categories used on the grid follow this narrative. A completed grid and a blank form is attached as well. We welcome feedback or questions from practitioners about the use and/or adaptation of the grid.

The following headings indicate evaluation factors to consider in holistically assessing learner progress. Brief descriptions are given to enable the practitioner to consider various components of learners' process and progress in literacy.

affective What are the observable behavioral benchmarks changes?

implicit Affective factors include: increased participation in both formal and informal activity in and out of the classroom; improvements in personal appearance,

explicit overall manner and interaction.

cognitive / mechanical

oral fluency What are the learner's aural/oral skills? Is these a discrepancy between literacy and orality?

accessing/strategizing How does the learner use the environment -- other students, available materials, posted print -- in order to find and use print?
How does the learner establish and/or recall meaning from print?

left/right scanning Does the learner understand directionality? [left/right, top to bottom?]

decoding /descriptive [student decodes for sound; e.g.]

Is the learner able to write the symbols of the alphabet?
Is the learner able to produce words when interacting with print?

encoding - [learner encodes with native language sound system]
Is the learner able to write the symbols of the alphabet?

predicting Is the learner able to make reasonable predicitions on the basis of: meaning, initial consonants, letter shape, word configurations, etc.?

letter/word indentification/use
discrimination: ability to spot misspelling/missing letters [in context] These are more specific components of decoding and encoding to consider when evaluating learners'abilities to interact with print.

self-monitoring Is the learner able to correct him/her self during the reading/writing processes?

metacognitive

viewing own process/progress Is the learner aware of the progess s/he makes interacting with print? How can the facilitator broaden this awareness? [e.g. student couldn't write own name upon entry, can now write name, address, etc.]

viewing process/progress of others
Are learners able to recognize and support gains made by others?

interactive

learner-learner interaction:

accessing/indicating for others Do learners help each other by showing each other where/how to find needed print information?

directing Do learners indicate to each other what/how to do in order to accomplish a particular literacy task?

instructing Do learners explicitly tell each other what/how to do in order to accomplish a particular literacy task?

praising Do learners explicitly encourage/praise each other?

correcting Do learners correct each other?

assisting Do learners help each other?

Another means by which to organize attentive observation and listening may be through the use of the following questions, which we originally developed for volunteers coming into ESL programs at the International Institute. The use of a different framework, such as this, may be helpful to practitioners trying to gain a new view on an ongoing class. These questions may also be useful in viewing video tapes of classes (or for listening to audtio tapes).

Classroom observation

While observing classes, consider focusing your attention on the following specific issues, and jot down notes on these and any other points which interest you.

Pre-observation questions

I. **General observation**: For about fifteen minutes, observe the class as a whole, while considering the following:

1. Describe the activities: What is the lesson about?
2. How are the people interacting?
   a. Who is doing most of the talking?
   b. Who is doing the listening?
   c. Are the students working cooperatively? independently? both?
3. Specific patterns of interaction:
   a. Where is the attention focused? (on: the teacher, the learners, materials, activities?)
   b. How does the teacher interact with the learners? (formally, casually, affirmation verbally/affirmation by touch, focussing on active students/focussing on quiet students/working for balance, etc.)

II. **Focus on one learner** involved in verbal interaction for at least 15 minutes. Note as much information as you can about the learner's interaction, and include, if you'd like, the following points:

1. Interaction (see 2c, 3b, 3c above)
2. What do you perceive the needs of this learner to be?

III. **Post-observation questions**:

1. Your general impression
   a. Would you be comfortable as a learner in this class? Why? Why not?
   b. Would you be comfortable as a teacher in this class? Why? Why not?
2. The lesson
   a. What were the teacher's objectives? What goals do you

Name _____ Class _____ Intake date _____

	date _____	date _____	date _____	transfer/ termination date _____
oral fluency aural comprehension				
affective tone interactive behaviors [health]				
cognitive skills [reading] [writing] [numeracy]				
metacognitive awarenesses				
goals [literacy] [employment] other				

feel the activities were designed to meet?
Consider these factors: lingusitic, (language) paralinguistic (gestures, body language), metalinguistic (talk about language), survival, affective, cognitive, cultural -- think about the relationship between language and its cultural content.

b. How did the teacher evaluate learners' progress during the lesson?

c. Based on your perception of the learners' observed/ observable needs, what would your next step/ lesson be, if you were facilitating that class?

materials

Like curriculum development, creation of materials within the Literacy/ESL Program can be viewed in a processive manner. Program staff facilitated the generation of a great deal of learner writing, which forms the bulk of the reading material used by learners within the program. Two most frequently used forms of writing were the dialog journal and the class News.

In addition to learner generated writings, some commercial texts and materials were used, mostly adapted and/or expanded by program facilitators in order to meet the specific needs of their learners. More important than the materials themselves might be the criteria used for selecting them. Many of the materials we used were selected because of the flexibility they offer in terms of content, reading or interest level. We looked for materials that offer learners multiple ways in which to interact with text. Some reading texts use visuals in such a way that learners may engage first through a visual image, develop their own pre-reading questions or even do some writing themselves prior to interacting with the text on the page. Other texts may provide less visual input but are of high interest or relevance to a given group of learners at a particular time. Other materials are not texts at all but rather consist of print realia brought to class by learners: photos, post cards, flyers and other visual or print images of interest to the group. Regardless of the medium, it is the process through which these materials are used that will ultimately determine their usefulness. Naturally, some materials lend themselves better than others to literacy learning, but, by and large, almost any print bearing meaning of interest to learners is up for grabs.

The Literacy Center

At the program's inception, we envisioned the creation of a permanent Literacy Center, in which resource materials, learner generated writings, texts, newsprint, easels and other equipment would be housed. Conceived as a static located collection, we imagined practitioners coming to the site, using the library of professional texts and articles, and learners at tape recorders, with sets of independent worksheets, engaged in other learner directed activities. The Literacy Center itself is Room 6, where the bookshelf will remain after the program has ended. Other

classes meet there during the day, and texts and learner generated writings are on the shelves. Our original intent shifted from creating a resource *site* to a larger notion of bringing access to literacy to where people are. The newsletter, off site programs, correspondence, conference participation, action research, inservice and collaboration across programs are in fact the Literacy Center. As stated in our original proposal to funders, the Center as such will in fact continue its existence beyond that of the three year program from which it evolved.

the materials

In examining trade materials, there are several questions and issues to consider:

reading / writing level

How does the material 'read' visually? What does a page look like? What about print size, print density, the amount of white space on a page? Does it appear to be 'hard' to read? Does it look too easy or juvenile? Is the page too busy? How does the layout (the 'look' of the page -- illustrations, visuals) enhance the text and help the reader into it?

generating interest

How do learners become engaged in interaction with print? Will prereading strategies be of use in helping them develop schema through which to build understanding of the text they'll read, thereby increasing their ability to predict, infer and otherwise interact actively with the printed words (and visual images?) How do you come to select a reading for your learners? What opportunity or choice do they have in initiating or selecting reading materials?

content

Are the themes and topics of interest to learners? Is the material presented in a culturally appropriate manner? Is it geared to adults? Is it interesting? Is it connected to events or experiences of interest to learners ?

assumptions/hidden agendas (between the lines)

What implicit message might be derived from the ways in which characters and events are depicted? Is a deficit view of the

adult non native speaker, non- or low-literate person being implied or even stated in the situations or characters delineated in the text? Does the text assume that learners have prior knowledge of the world, and help them learn and work from their strengths? Is there evidence of bias -- racial, economic, social, is one ethnic group perhaps illustrated in one way while another might be portrayed in a less sympathetic or realistic light?

adaptability: extending/expanding

How can you use the materials? Can the learners use them independently, or are they designed for reading and writing activity among other learners within the classroom/learning situation? Is the book designed for group or individual learning (are there 'ask your partner' or other dyad exercises)? Is a text reliant upon a cassette tape? Can the text be adapted up or down level to accommodate a multilevel class? Are you inspired by the text to develop additional activities and exercises that will facilitate learning in ways best suited to your students?

The **curriculum** section provides suggestions for adapting and expanding materials and enumerates strategies for generating learner interest and engagement with text[s].

use of photos/visuals

As noted in the curriculum section, photos and other visual images are used extensively in generating discussion, from which writing and reading activity evolves. Although learners' family photos and pictures of events often generate the most sustained interest, there are other sources of visuals which are useful for a variety of contexts.

commercially made visuals

Double Action Picture Cards. Using oversized (20 by 14") black and white drawings, the cards depict common and not so common events in two sections (each of which can be viewed separately) such as a picture of a family, in which two older people (parents?) are dressed up and their children are lined up in front of them. In and of itself the card can be used to generate discussion about families and social customs: baby sitters, large/small families, going out, etc. However, in conjunction with its other picture (the*double action*), wherein the children are running wild all over the house and street, one can add in a discussion of attitudes towards obedience, child proofing and general

household safety, appropriate behavior (whatever that may be). One can ask, "What do you think will happen?" after looking at the first card and thus lead into the second. Or, one can use either card by itself. The two pictures are physically located on one large cardboard sheet, scored in the center for easy folding and holding; one or both pictures can be shown at a given time. Additionally, an instructor's guide lists suggested language/ grammar activities to complement the cards. For learners who are able to 'read' drawings, the cards lend themselves to any number of language experience and literacy centered activities. (Cards by Jane Yedlin, Workbook by JaneYedlin and Earl Stevick, both illustrated by Penny Carter . Addison-Wesley.)

Picture dictionaries and wall charts: Oxford has produced a Picture Dictionary in both mono- and bilingual versions covering predictable topics -- body parts, rooms of the house (generally well appointed houses -- not apartments), clothing, maps, animals, cars, etc. The new picture dictionary seems to appeal more to foreign language learners (visitors), although that might be a biased statement. Both the new and older dictionaries reflect a view of middle class life in terms of the images of homes, cars, clothing, etc.

Longman has produced a Photo Dictionary covering comparable topics, with the obvious advantage of using photographs which might be easier to decipher than drawings. Again, the mainstream/middle class images may work both as catalysts of discussion or simply as descriptive renderings of objects and events. The photo dictionary wall charts are particularly useful for their images of supermarkets, common fast foods, body parts and colors.

use of audio and videotape: learner/teacher ongoing assessment

When possible or available, taping classes allows the practitioner to observe from a distance learner interaction. When videotaping, focus on learners provides the best information. The facilitator is heard, and not seen. Viewing the tape provides insight to learners and facilitators about their own progress (show a tape you made three months ago). Learners also enjoy watching a tape immediately after it's been made. Audio tapes, though less satisfying in some ways also provide a very objective description of classroom interaction. For more on use of tapes, see *Find out how you teach*, by Janine Pak. (1985, National Curriculum Resource Center, Adult Migrant Education Program, Adelaide: Australia.)

use of typewriter / word processing

Although much of the 'new' software is still 'new' and untested widely, it is our contention that software is like textbooks for the screen. Some work, some engage learners, and others are pitched at nonexistent ideal learners whose learning needs cannot be addressed through interaction with a text or with a computer program. For that reason, it is our view that the most productive use of typing or word processing technology is comparable to that of language experience -- in a new medium

learner generated publications

Voices : New writers for new readers, a magazine of learners' writings published by the Invergarry Reading Centre in Vancouver. Ranging from 'new voices' to transitions to later writings, the magazine is published three times yearly and includes autobiographical statements, letters in response to previous writings and reviews of films and books. 14525 110A Ave. Surrey, British Columbia, V3R 2B4 Canada..

Need I Say More : Literacy learners' writings, through the Adult Literacy Resource Institute, 989 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

books / publishing houses

Ligon, Fred. (1990). *Picture stories* - sequenced line drawings accompanied by numerous literacy and language activities, pertaining to survival/cultural orientation issues, occupations, daily situations in the US. Longman.

Long, Llynellyn D. and Janet Spiegel-Podnecky, (1988).*In Print: Beginning literacy through cultural awareness.* - combines standard life skills topics with both phonics, matching and other literacy exercises with a problem-posing approach. Uses photos and line drawings; separate Teachers' Guide available. Addison-Wesley.

Mrowicki, Linda. (1990). *First words* - uses photos, one or two word captions, literacy exercises to cover the following topics/ contexts: school, rooms of the house, personal information. Linmore Publishing, Inc.

_____. (1989). *Starting to read*: - moves from single words to sentences and paragraphs covering school, home, personal and cultural information embedded in writings about individual people. Illustrated with photos. Linmore.

_____. (1985, 1987, 1989).*Personal stories [1, 2, and 3]*. The lives of six sets of characters/families are detailed over three years. Beginning with simple sentences (in Book 1) and developing through to complex paragraphs, the series introduces readers to fiction reading about various 'typical' Americans. Comprehension, production and problem posing exercises accompany each chapter. Illustrated with photos. Linmore.

_____. (1986). *Practice with your partner*. Dyad cards on the topics of numbers, addresses, time and other daily language/literacy; provides useful practice in dictation and other manipulations of language and literacy in a controlled format. Linmore .

Olsen, Judy Winn-Bell. (1984). *Look again pictures for language development and life skills*. Timothy White created double sets of line drawings depicting high frequency daily events/ situations (such as a coffee shop, a kitchen, a driving school, a clothing store, etc.). Each pair of drawings is almost identical; there are 8 tiny differences that learners find and circle. The visual activity leads to sequenced sets of exercises addressing language functions, lifeskills, and other language based activities contextualized within a concrete situation. Alemany/Prentice Hall Regents.

Linmore Publishing, Inc.
PO Box 1545
Palatine, IL.

Prentice Hall Regents
200 Old Tappan Road
Old Tappan, NJ 07675

Longman
95 Church Street
White Plains, NY 10601-1505

Alemany / PHR
255 Constituion Drive
Menlo Park, CA 94205

Oxford University Press/ESL Dept.
200 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.
2725 Sand Hill Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Approaches and Activities for ESL / Literacy Classrooms

This list delineates a number of techniques and methods which can be incorporated into any ESL/literacy classroom and also lend themselves particularly well to multi-level classes. In and of themselves they may serve as little more than tricks of the trade. However, within a contextualized series of activities and/ or within a given topic or topics, they may serve to expand on-going literacy interaction within the classroom. We list them here not as a laundry list of skills and drills, but as part of an ongoing effort to demystify practice.

Brief descriptions are given for each heading. As you explore these options -- either for the first time, or as a familiar part of your ongoing practice -- you may want to read more about the theory behind them and ways in which they've been used. Consider this to be somewhat of an idea file from which to work and to add your own ideas and activities.

Audio Tapes -- dictation, listening practice, 'authentic' language, drills, tapes of guest speakers, e.g. Teacher or student-made or commercially prepared, tapes lend themselves to extended multi-level activity. Learners can listen for content, for particular words or phrases. Popular songs lend themselves well to cloze exercises. Learners can generate and tape dialogs and then transcribe them. Language experience stories can be read on tape and listened to by learners who might then read the accompanying texts during independent/individual working times. How can integrating sound and symbol be of use to your learners? How can you use audio tape to create materials specifically useful to learners?

Bingo -- sets of bingo cards can be designed for specific topics, such as months/days/digital and analog clock times, occupations, colors, numbers [numerals/words], foods, items of clothing, etc. Words and/or pictures can be used to create each card. Use cuisinaire rods, bottle caps, beans, coins, buttons, etc., for markers. Aside from providing a change of pace, bingo cards and the process of playing bingo involve reading horizontally and vertically, scanning, matching sounds, symbols and images, and may serve to reinforce certain forms of 'document' literacy.

Cloze -- basically a fill in the blanks exercise. You can omit every ___th word, or pronouns, verbs, or other particular words/parts of speech upon which you wish to focus. For very

beginning level students, the cloze is a good exercise for copying -- visual discrimination, letter formation, etc. It's also good practice for working on high frequency or topical words.

Dialogue journals -- work from learners' existing strengths and knowledge. For more information, see **toolbox**.

Dyads -- various interactive pair activities: information gaps, charts, grids, giving/receiving directions. Dyads create a situation of interdependence. Students need each other (and each other's information) to accomplish a task, fill in a form, solve a problem or otherwise complete a given activity. (See also **pair work, grids**).

Flashcards -- words and groups of words can be physically manipulated, arranged, seen, used, read, etc. Frequently used words may be posted on a wall or bulletin board for future access and reference, although some argue that words by themselves on flashcards may be too decontextualized to be useful to learners.

Grids -- a useful format for beginning readers. Essential information appears horizontally and/or vertically. Encourages various left/right, up/down scanning skills. Grids can be built around learners' dates of birth, dates of entry to the US, number of children, addresses, zip codes, phone numbers, jobs, etc. Useful in providing information for comparison in a visual format that can be read easily -- without connecting words, or long-looking sentences (which *can* be built from information taken from a grid).

Hangman -- Especially popular with the advent of *Wheel of Fortune*. Hangman is good for the last five or ten minutes of a class session to reinforce new words or even multi-word messages, or to simply use words learners know but perhaps haven't written that particular day. Predicting, inferencing, counting letters, using vowels and consonants are all valuable sub skills developed within the context of playing the game. These skills emerge after learners have played several times; there's no need to introduce vowels/consonants in isolation. As learners get the feel of the fame, and understand that 'r' might not be an appropriate choice to complete 'n_xt', they begin to get a sense of how vowels and consonants work (if they haven't already through their own ongoing interaction with writing and reading). They're using previous learning and their ability to predict the word 'next' probably having seen it frequently. Messages that might be used include reminders (please bring one

new word to class tomorrow), jokes, phrases or other relevant information.

Interview/information grids -- students interview each other and insert given responses into appropriate places on the grid.

Alphanumeric grids -- using a derivative of total physical response, learners use information, generated previously through conversation, to complete alphanumeric grids. (Put the [name of this month] in G-11; write [your middle name] in F-3). This is important pre-work for map reading and for other kinds of document literacy.

Language Experience Approach -- The language experience approach (LEA) represents a basic means for generating language in oral and written forms. Practitioners adapt and implement the approach in various ways, but, essentially, LEA consists of using learners' spoken language and transcribing it into written form. The rationale is that learning to read has to do with using previous knowledge of the world (i.e. experience) along with strategies such as inferring and predicting meaning based on that experience. Further, meaningful content and context is not only more interesting to learners, it is easier to retain. To illustrate, read this fragment and try to recollect it without looking back: Pat put paper, peppers, potatoes and pots in planters to protect them. Now read this: Yesterday I went downtown to buy shoes. The example is exaggerated intentionally -- an emphasis only on phonics has little to do with meaningful content; an utterance describing a real event using high frequency words common and known to learners contains meaning and authentic vocabulary. Such an utterance forms a basis for generating writing that learners can and will want to read. Work on phonics (sound/symbol correspondences) and grammar forms is embedded in the content of the language generated by learners.

In its purest form, LEA is an exact encoding of learners' words. The learner tells his/her story, and the teacher (or other scribe) writes that story exactly as s/he hears it. After the story has been written, the learner then uses it as the basis for his/her reading material for that particular session.

LEA can be used with an individual learner in one on one tutoring or at a blackboard in a group learning situation. The story can also be constructed by more than one person. The learner might begin to talk about something s/he remembers about a class field trip, for example. Others might then contri-

bute their recollections until a paragraph (or several paragraphs, with more advanced learners) has been written. The facilitator then invites learners to read the paragraph (and might invite them to read every two or three sentences as the story is being written).

With very beginning learners the story might consist of three or four short sentences. An example: **Last week I went to Boston. It was cold. I saw my friend. I came home at 5 o'clock.** Once this story has been encoded, learners read it through several times, together and individually. Although it may seem that hearing ten other people read the same passage would be tedious, learners remain engaged in the process -- watching and listening to others; preparing themselves for the trip to the newsprint or blackboard to read. The facilitator has a chance to observe who helps whom, who 'memorizes' a passage by reading one word while pointing to another, who wants to read first, who needs encouragement from peers, etc. Once the story's been read, beginning level learners might spend a good amount of time copying it into their notebooks. The facilitator might invite learners whose productive skills lag behind their receptive skills to go to the text and circle 'Boston' or all the words that begin with a particular letter. For the next session the story can be typed and distributed to learners for review. Questions might be added; comprehension questions (was it cold in Boston?)may be useful for learners who want visible evidence of pencil/paper interaction, for whom learning occurs incrementally. Other open ended questions (Do you go to Boston? Do you like Boston?) may generate yet another round of language experience writing.

Beginning learners might start with photos or other visual images which they label and learn. Fran's learners have self adhesive photo albums in which they save these images and writing. As they gain more written language, the photo albums reflect a shift from visual to written forms. The photos can be used initially for labelling purposes; later sentences and stories may be built from those pictures.

LEA can also be used to encourage learners to write by inviting them each to contribute one sentence to a general topic, such as: **Last week-end I . . .** Learners will each write one sentence about their weekend; (in fact the News evolved from such an activity). Once learners have seen the process modeled -- the facilitator listens, asks clarification questions, suggests words when needed and then encodes them -- learners take over

the work of scribing with and for each other.

Many of the activities suggested in this section derive from the language experience approach. Some facilitators correct learners as they transcribe for them. ("Last week I go" becomes a question from the facilitator: "You went?"). Others leave learners to transcribe for each other or transcribe the exact utterances, because these are the words learners know and use.

As learners continue to gain facility with language they will correct each other. LEA all by itself is a starting point. It is unfair to send learners out into the world with only a private language, which LEA can become. We view it as a bridge between learners' initial uses of oral and written language and the wider world of print that exists beyond the classroom.

For more information, see *Language experience approach to reading (and writing): LEA for ESL*, by Carol N. Dixon and Denise Nessel (Alemany), Whole Language in Adult ESL Programs, by Pat Rigg (*ERIC/CLL News Bulletin* , March 1990), and Whole language and adult literacy education, by Francis Kazemek, (*Information Update*, Literacy Assistance Center, 15 Dutch St., NYC).

Operations -- similar to TPR (see below), operations are processes such as using a pay phone, making a sandwich, using a vending machine in, which a procedure may be familiar to students (thereby helping build schema and context), but the words used in English may be unfamiliar in their oral and/or written forms. Generating instructions (how to do one thing or another) and writing and then reading these steps may contribute to the kinds of literacy associated with following written instructions/ directions, such as those found at laundromats, self-service business, airports, bus stations, etc.

Pair Work -- students can be grouped randomly, advanced beginner, beginner/beginner, advanced/advanced. *Teaching ESL in a multi-level classroom* (Jill Bell), *Practice with your partner* (Linda Mrowicki), and *A Handbook for ESL literacy* (Jill Bell and Barbara Burnaby) all list pros and cons of various configurations. The demands of a given task as well as the needs and abilities of your learners will indicate which grouping arrangement might work best. It's important to vary the groupings so that students have an opportunity to participate both as learners and as teachers. Peer tutoring can evolve from beginner/ advanced combinations and also tends to evolve naturally across

and within any level, as students come to know each other and as a supportive environment develops in the classroom.

Photos -- of family members, events, from magazines and newspapers (advertisements, local/national news), class events, etc. Photos are very useful in helping students generate language, which can then be developed in various ways according to your particular learners' needs. As learners become more comfortable with each other and with the learning process, spontaneous questions, answers and conversation increase. This oral language may be channeled in language experience writing, or labeling and other forms of written materials. (See also Visuals).

Picture Stories -- to focus upon a specific topic, or to generate discussion around an issue or event. Language can be generated as with photos [see above]. Sequencing and scrambling exercises can be developed; brainstorming, problem-posing and a variety of other activities can evolve. Picture stories generally involve multiple images, in which a sequenced set of drawing or photos will relate some event or problem. Fred Ligon's *Picture stories* (Longman) is one of the best published compilations of such stories currently available.

Scrambling/sequencing -- sentences, pictures, paragraphs. As with flashcards, language/images can be manipulated. Scrambling and sequencing work well within given topics; levels of complexity can vary within the class. (Beginners can unscramble/sequence short sentences, paragraphs, etc., and more advanced students can do proportionately more.

TPR: Total Physical Response -- relies more or less upon the premise that students aren't asked to produce language until they are familiar and comfortable with it. Students respond to various commands, (e.g. 'go to the window') without having to utter or to repeat them. These commands can be given orally or in writing: literacy exercises on the blackboard or on flashcards; one word commands such as 'erase', 'write', 'read', etc. Commands in both oral and written forms can grow in length and complexity as students progress; within the multilevel class both simple and more complex commands can be combined. For all levels, with TPR, 'please' is an important word.

Video tapes - Taped commercials, newscasts, weather reports, rented movies and tapes of learners all contribute to a change of modality as well as allowing a variety of topics to be explored graphically, and/ or visually. A video tape can be stopped,

discussed, rewound, replayed and used in numerous ways to suit multiple needs and purposes.

Visuals- Photos, picture stories, and realia can be used in various ways. Students can work individually, in pairs, in small groups or as a whole group developing LEA writing, asking/answering questions, describing (adjectives, comparatives, superlatives) using pronouns, practicing verbs tenses – the possibilities are limitless. Visuals serve as useful codes for problem-posing at all levels, too. *Double Action Picture Cards* lend themselves to multiple uses at multiple levels.

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THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL-BULLETIN
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—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB BREIDENBACH

OVERCOMING BARRIERS: Instructor Janet Isserlis, facing camera at left, enjoys a joke with students last week in her literacy class at the Joslin-Manton Extension Center in Olneyville.

Literacy classes travel to women learning how to get along in U.S.

By KAREN LEE ZINER
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Celia Maldonado wants to know what the "columnista's" job entails. She wonders, "Is it, for example, like Lois (Lane) and Clark Kent?"

Something like that, the columnista (reporter) replies.

How does the newspaper hear about fires and accidents? Who decides what the reporter writes about?

The impromptu discussion of journalism provided a focus for a literacy class last week in an unusual setting — the basement of the Joslin-Manton Extension Center at the Manton Heights Project in Olneyville.

Most of the students are women, most of them homemakers. Many are from Puerto Rico, Ecuador or the Dominican Republic. Spanish is their native language.

Project Persona of the International Institute of Rhode Island sponsors the class.

When the people won't come to a traditional class — because of such obstacles as transportation, child care or fear of failure — "we really are committed to get out into the community," says William Shuey, International Institute director.

Janet Isserlis, who teaches the class at Manton Heights, says it is designed to help people who may have difficulty reading in regular English as a Second Language classes. The content "comes from what's important to the students and their lives."

> 'Writing is the core activity, but before you can write, you must talk.'
> JANET ISSERLIS

For instance, the students are involved in a project that encourages them to write about photographs of family events. They do regular writing in their journals, and recently listened to a speaker discuss AIDS.

She also uses the opportunity at hand — such as the visiting journalists — to encourage conversation.

"Writing is the core activity," says Isserlis, "but before you can write, you must talk."

The Literacy Program, now in its second year, operates on a three-year grant from the state Department of Education, as well as private sources.

The Manton Heights class is one of several classes conducted by Project Persona outside its offices.

At a South Providence home, Fran Filipek Collignon, another literacy specialist, runs classes for elderly Hispanic people. She also provides technical assistance at a weekly class at the Southeast Asian Support Center at St. Joseph Hospital.

At the latter class, Filipek Collignon and Socheat Hak of the Cambodian Women's Learning Support Group teach women such things as how to use a calendar, recognize street signs, spell their names over the telephone, "read maps, get out of the house, and help each other," says Diane Pizzi, support center director.

At Manton Heights last week, a little boy quietly worked with crayons in a corner by himself. ("We are our own child care," says Isserlis. "We just try to keep the kids from getting hurt, and it works.")

Isserlis engaged the class with her easy, gentle manner.

"Well, I've been outvoted," she says with a laugh as her students take up a discussion in which they clearly disagree with her.

Later, she invites student Maldonado to take over at the chalkboard.

"It's the whole decentralization of the authority of teaching. To really help people to learn how to teach and become teachers themselves," says Isserlis. Eventually, she hopes to "sign off," and leave the class in someone else's hands.

Toward the end of last week's session, the students shared a bit of their own culture.

Victoria Rodriguez, of the Dominican Republic, and Maldonado stood up to dance a lively salsa on the tile floor.

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outreach

Outreach began with the needs assessment process, during which literacy staff sought input not only about who potential learners might be, but also about what kind of outreach might be appropriate for recruitment of such learners. Staff met with social service and educational providers with whom potential learners might come in contact and met with learners on site in other programs in order to get their input as well.

In addition to outreach work done as part of recruitment for classes held on site, staff worked through various community based agencies and individuals in order to establish classes in alternative settings which would meet the needs identified and delineated during the needs assessment process. Childcare and transportation were among the most significant situational barriers to participation in literacy learning identified for many non native speakers of English, particularly women, so that it seemed appropriate to assist in developing learning opportunities that would be more easily accessed (in learners' neighborhoods) and which would provide some form of childcare as well. Those sites include: a hospital/mental health support group, a housing a project, public library sites, a private home and a residence for the elderly.

Outreach led to interaction with providers at a number of sites with whom the agency previously had few, if any, linkages. During the last three years staff were called upon for technical assistance not only in the areas of teacher education and staff development for ESL and ESL/literacy providers, but also in the area of providing:

- an informal assessment of potential language/literacy ability for a mildly retarded Hispanic man employed at a sheltered workshop;
- cultural background information for high school counselors working with troubled Southeast Asian youth;
- scripting and filming for a Literacy Volunteers of America tutor training tape;
- support to classes at libraries and through churches and housing projects;
- input to and participation on a national advisory board on exemplary practice in provision of ESL/literacy to adult learners.

In keeping with their goal of facilitating access to literacy for non native speakers of English, program staff maintained contact with some former program learners and with providers interacting with prospective learners. This ongoing communication through staff participation in committee work and social events broadened access to information about opportunities for literacy learning as did dissemination of the program newsletter.
Program staff's participation in the start up of literacy classes off site increased opportunities for literacy and achieved capacity building in existing community programs.

Offsite programs

Manton

Having heard (in 1988) of a project in Britain in which community based organizations were incorporating literacy into capacity building for activists, we became intrigued with the idea of building offsite learning centers around the Providence area through which to increase opportunities for literacy learning for a larger number of people. Eric Appleby, then a literacy worker in Britain, demonstrated graphically that the number of people needing access to literacy learning far outstripped the number of learning slots available to them. He pointed out, however, that many potential literacy learners were involved in various forms of community action -- through tenants' associations, child care groups, housing advocates, etc. A typical scenario among such community based organizations might be that as an activist becomes increasingly involved in ongoing projects, he or she might be given more and more responsibility within the organization. One day, someone suggests that this person write a letter to a local official, and suddenly that volunteer drops from view. One plausible explanation for this attrition might be a literacy problem which the person may not wish to share with others. Hence, a valuable community worker is lost from the ranks.

> Recent research has shown that there are around six million adults in the UK who have difficulties with reading, writing or maths. Of these, around 100,000 are involved at any one time in learning through an adult literacy or numeracy scheme. Many more, however, are members of local voluntary organizations or community groups.
> **Community groups are often aware that:** there are members of the group who lack confidence in their reading, writing or maths; most people, whatever their level of basic skills, have plenty to offer by way of experience and ideas; [and] some people appear more willing than others to offer their ideas.
> **They may not be aware that:** a lack in confidence in basic skills can seriously affect [one's] confidence in taking on other activities; this may be affecting some of their mem-

> bers' level of involvement in the group; [and] as a group, they can help their members to gain confidence in basic skills .
> Write then - let's change! V. Williams, S. Watts, J. Crawford, National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes, 1988.

In addition to the potential loss of talent and energy within community organizing, it also seemed that there was generally an underprovision of learning opportunities to certain segments of the population.

The following account describes the Literacy/ESL Program's efforts to address community needs in a comparable context. At Manton Heights, a Providence inner city housing project, classes in ABE and GED were offered by the state's Department of Education. However, although a small number of native speakers of English participated in the classes, Manton's population of Spanish speaking people was far greater, and no language classes were being offered to them at all.

In July of 1988, Janet went out to meet the site manager at Manton who confirmed the presence of a large Hispanic population and the need for ESL/literacy classes at the project. During a series of predictable delays ranging from physical space allocation to lack of staff support at the site, Janet maintained regular contact with site personnel and finally in January of 1989 was able to begin the classes, which met twice weekly through June of that year and during the entire 89-90 academic year. As a result of the concerted efforts of Julia Iacono and the Providence Housing Authority and Art Lee at the Manton site, Celia Orellana, one of the former learners in that class, began work as a paid facilitator at the site in September of 1990. Thus our goal of capacity building/helping the community gain the needed expertise with which to help itself was being realized to some extent.

What is replicable in the process with community learners is similar to that which is replicable in our approach to inservice support and ongoing teacher education and development. Celia participated actively as a learner: spent time during the late summer and early fall in meetings, doing recruitment and participating in teacher workshops, and effectively took over the teaching responsibilities for the Manton site. Celia's reflections on the process follow:

My name is Celia R. Orellana. I am a teacher at Manton Heights on Salmon Street. I want to write about my new role as teacher. For me it is very important because now I have more responsibility. Before I was a student and never was afraid to learn, because my teacher Janet gave me security, motivation and now I am a teacher.

Some of my students were my classmates before. When I started the class on October 10, 1990, I felt very strange and just a little confused. I was thinking, "how can they respect me when before I was a student ?" ... Now I feel great and very positive. My students are very different, for example: some students are young, others came from different countries. But the important thing is they want to learn English. Some students said, "teacher, I want to learn English because when I got to my appointment I don't know how to speak, I understand just a little ... what can I do?" And that's one idea that my students tell me sometimes.

I have a lot of things to talk about my students. Now I'm sure I do the best I can. They are my motivation, they are my students they are my friends.

Elma Street

An ESL/literacy class met on Elma Street in South Providence every Monday morning from 10 to 11:30 from March until May '89. It began in response to the request of Lucy Santa, the coordinator of the Spanish Ministry at St. Michael's Church, to serve older Hispanic adults (40 - 77). Nine students, illiterate in Spanish as well as in English, were on the roster, with attendance averaging 6 each week. Situational needs (e.g. responsibility for grandchildren's day care, lack of transportation and fear of school) had previously kept these learners from attending traditional ESL classes. Lucy organized the class and agreed to recruit a bilingual volunteer from churchgoers at St. Michael's.

Martha Perez agreed to hold the class in her home and to be trained as a facilitator. Besides anticipating a very rewarding experience, Martha considered the classes an opportunity to share with her elderly parents (two of the prospective participants) the education they had afforded her in Colombia. Martha stated that she had always wanted to be an IIRI volunteer but was never sure what she had to give. Being a facilitator trainee in the Literacy/ESL Program offered her the way to care for her

young children in the morning, work second shift and volunteer, too. Fran facilitated classes for three months from March to May with Martha assisting. Martha continued classes during the summer without Fran. The summer classes took place at times more convenient to the participants. Fran provided support in the form of planning and supplying materials to Martha.

The class fell apart in the fall. Martha changed from third to first shift at work. One learner moved. Two others, previously unemployed, got jobs. The convenient time for class disappeared, as did the original group of learners. Martha, in reminiscing about the group, referred to herself as filling in for Fran during the summer. She regretted that learners (some of them relatives of hers) no longer had a teacher and therefore could not get as much out of the experience. This conversation, six months after the class ended, touched on familiar issues that surfaced repeatedly from the experiences of volunteer facilitators: 1) learners' perceptions of the role of the teacher; 2)volunteer facilitators' projections to learners about the facilitators' role; 3) ESL speakers' levels of confidence in facilitating ESL literacy groups and 4) facilitators' questions about the goals of learners and their commitments to literacy groups.

Providence Public Library Family Literacy Program: Preparation of Volunteers

In January of 1989, Fran responded to a request from the Providence Public Library (PPL) that eventually involved several areas of technical assistance. After an initial meeting with the Coordinator of Volunteers and subsequent ones with the Literacy Program Director and Chief of Adult Services (all of PPL), Fran assisted the responsible parties in designing direct service opportunities in literacy for individuals at branch libraries. Their projects for target populations included significant numbers of ESL literacy learners.

Additionally, the planners asked for ideas for instruction in literacy for the adult component of an intergenerational learning program. They felt that their children's librarians could service the children's needs, but they could not decide how to address anticipated ESL needs of participating adults. They expected groups of learners at different levels, and also wondered what the basis for intergenerational activity might be. In response, Fran reflected back on a similar program she had planned and coordinated several years before at the South Providence branch library for Hmong women and their children. Library proposal

writers adapted her idea and proposed it to funders for implementation at the library branches.

Several months later the library was notified of funding from the Department of State Library Services and set the fall of 1989 as a start up time for the new program. Library Staff contacted Fran to do an orientation session for volunteers, given their awareness of their volunteer tutors' hesitations around intercultural issues as well as about the teaching tasks at hand. Fran agreed to train PPL's Family Literacy Program Director as a facilitator to volunteer tutors, with the understanding that the Director would eventually take over the duties of orientation of volunteers, and, as part of the coordination role of the Intergenerational Literacy Program, be responsible for ongoing support and supervision of the tutors. This collaboration of the IIRI Literacy/ESL Program staff with various library personnel and volunteers developed throughout 1989.

In December of 1989 some changes in positions of library personnel occurred. For example, Rosanne Trissler, previously involved in the Family Literacy Program as a children's specialist at one of the library's branch locations, became the new director of the program.

From November of 1989 until January of 1990, Fran spent 3 hours each Monday (an hour and a half at each of the two branch libraries) participating in the program with seven library volunteers who tutored adults. She and the director initially planned the language experience activities. They explained strategies for introducing reading and writing for learners to the volunteers at each site before learners came. They were also available for consultation during those sessions.

The very talented and competent children's librarians introduced the children who accompanied the adults to books and activities. The program director and volunteer personnel planned hands-on activities that parents and children enjoyed together once a week, e.g. making placements, tracing hands, fixing snacks. After January, Fran had visited the branches only monthly during the program. Roseanne, the current director, had taken over the duties of preparing the volunteer tutors, their plans, materials and support. As a result of the success of classes that first school year, both with adults and children separately on Mondays and intergenerationally on Wednesdays, the Library Program secured additional funding for the next calendar year (September '90 to June '91). The Family Program

expanded to two more branch libraries, making the program accessible to people living near four branch libraries, and necessitated the hiring of a person to coordinate the intergenerational classes and volunteers. Rosanne, as the director of the entire Literacy Program at PPL (its administrative responsibilities, holdings at the library, PR, etc.), passed on what she learned and experienced about training volunteers to the person in the new position.

At the orientation program in October 1990, at which Fran and Janet made presentations, we were reminded that the Literacy/ESL Program at IIRI responded to the Library's request for technical assistance by assisting in the design of a replicable intergenerational literacy program, initially training volunteers, and subsequently training a facilitator of volunteers who continued to replicate the process with her new personnel.

Fran dialogued in subsequent meetings with Rosanne about questions which recur from those engaged in literacy and for which answers appear, change and reappear again and again.

1. How does one find out what causes a learner to make the inconvenient move to come to class, and how does one capitalize on learners' current goal(s)?

2. Is it helpful to attempt to do an individual intake/interview or orientation with each parent at the outset of a program, or should we just start?

3. How can parents have realistic expectations of the intergenerational program's component for children; what is their understanding of the program? How can parents and librarians better come to explore and understand each other's agendas Does their understanding of it acknowledge the program as being more than babysitting? (e.g. parents needing a break from childcare and preferring to learn apart from children, librarians wanting to introduce library activities to families)?

<u>Learning Support Group at Southeast Asian Support Center, St. Joseph Hospital</u>

Professional development within ESL literacy provision took place in the collaboration between the staffs of the IIRI Literacy/ESL Program and St. Joseph Hospital beginning in the fall of 1989. The following account describes a Learning Support Group for Cambodian women at the hospital's Southeast Asian Sup-

port Center. The model for adult ESL literacy in this setting emerged as a spin off of the Literacy/ESL Program at IIRI. It suggests some connections between the fields of literacy and mental health. It also demonstrates some benefits of professional collaboration to address the often complex concerns of students or clients.

The learner support group originated in discussions between Socheat Hak, a Cambodian mental health worker at the center, and Diane Pizzi, her supervisor. In conversations with Socheat, Diane had discovered Socheat's new confidence with English and increased self esteem. Socheat attributed this confidence to her success with process approaches to reading and writing in a college composition course she had recently completed. Socheat and Diane consequently decided on communicative help with ESL literacy as the focus of a support group they had been planning. The group had been envisioned as a follow up or additional support for Cambodian women terminating or in individual counseling in their hospital program. The planners hoped for the same enhanced self esteem for these women that Socheat displayed.

Fran accepted Diane and Socheat's invitation to facilitate the first 12-session series with the group, modelling strategies for beginning ESL literacy. Socheat and Diane were participants in the group, along with their clients and their preschool aged children who surrounded them, playing on straw mats on a makeshift classroom floor. In keeping with the Literacy/ESL Program's goal of increasing access to literacy for non native speakers of English, the planners (Socheat, Diane and Fran) agreed that Socheat and Diane would each serve as the facilitator of a group after the initial twelve sessions. Fran would be available for ongoing support. The technical assistance, in the form of preparation of ESL literacy facilitators, would provide professional development and capacity building in the Southeast Asian Support Center's existing program.

Socheat Hak (presenting with Literacy/ESL Program staff at the New England Multifunctional Resource Center's Conference, *Literacy, Collaboration, and Practice,* in Boston on April 9, 1990) shared these reflections on the benefits of literacy facilitators collaborating across cultures

> I am Socheat Hak, a Cambodian Mental Health Worker at the Southeast Asian Support Center, which is an Outpatient Coun-

seling and Psychiatric Services Program for Southeast Asians (Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian and Vietnamese). I work as a support to help a number of Cambodian women to cope with fear, stress, isolation, boredom, nervousness and anxiety related to their war experiences. The Southeast Asian Support Center has decided to begin a group called the Cambodian Women's Learning Support Group. Class is open every Thursday from 9:30 - 11:00. Transportation is also provided.

There are many reasons why Fran, a worker in the Literacy Program at the International Institute, came to the group. First of all, she helped get the group going, with me as a cultural resource. For example, I suggested topics these women need and that we sit on a mat. It is easy for them to hold a baby and to watch the kids playing around them. I don't have any experience to teach English. It is different from what I taught -- "Khmer." The sounds of the vowels never change in the Cambodian language.

If Fran always stays with the group, she never has a chance to begin other groups. So, now I continue the program, even though I still need help. English is my second language. It is hard for me to say the right word. Pronunciation is a problem. I want these women to hear the right pronunciation with no accent. Fran helps me with that. I learn the right pronunciations although my accent is never gone. I accept that.

Fran helps me with educational supplies. We use photo albums, take pictures, use books, use a board with chalk, newsprint with marker, notebooks for homework, a booklet with information about taking the bus, a wooden clock. She has cultural resources for us. We want to learn things Americans do, like making cards at Christmas time.

Every time I write a reading for the group (e.g., about taking the bus, where to put garbage), I ask Fran to help to correct my writing. I meet Fran many times to talk about the needs of the group like the topics or plan (e.g. how to plan for a trip, how to talk about a topic). I really need help from Fran to begin the group and ideas to continue.

The group's significance in follow-up mental health services for clients of the Southeast Asian Support Center at the hospital continued to evolve. Socheat's bilingual capabilities enhanced her role as a facilitator. They enabled her to elicit participants'

language needs and then to respond with what she referred to as her own cultural resources and those of the Americans she enlisted to help her: her work supervisor, American college students doing field placements in social work at her agency and staff of the Literacy/ESL Program at IIRI. Socheat initiated activities with her clients and addressed issues of language and culture otherwise inaccessible to service providers who were American-born native speakers of English.

After a year of weekly sessions, Socheat's Thursday morning group included some regular participants and some newer members they welcomed. Shortly after the end of the first year, Diane Pizzi, a participant in the first series of sessions Fran facilitated in the fall of '89, assisted in the start-up of an additional group for men, facilitated by Sambath Long, a male Southeast Asian mental health worker and Diane. Impetus from the Literacy/ESL program at IIRI for off-site classes therefore resulted in capacity-building by hospital staff at the Southeast Asian Support Center.

These collaborations around Learning Groups demonstrated how practitioners working together linked cultures and created new understandings. A more holistic approach to language development in such a setting suggests some possibilities for connections between related fields (e.g. mental health and literacy) to connect refugees' efforts to reconstruct their lives. Michael Paul, a committed educator and critical thinker, writing with others in the 80's in *Preventive mental health in the ESL classroom: A handbook for teachers,*[1] probed the ongoing discussion of relationships between the events in refugees' lives and the place of the ESL classroom in addressing their mental health issues. Mary Ann Bromley, a social work professor and field supervisor particularly committed to Cambodian refugee issues, described successful interventions as those "culturally sensitive to the refugee's unique ways of communicating and coping and also functioning in Western society."[2] Socheat's structuring of the Learning Support Group demonstrated the benefits of collaborations across cultures in providing literacy opportunities that serve also as productive interventions.

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[1] Paul, M. (ed.). (1986). *Preventive Mental Health in the ESL classroom: A handbook for teachers*. New York: ACNS. (Attn: PP/MH, 95 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016).

[2] "New Beginnings for Cambodian Refugees - or Further Disruptions?", *The Journal of National Association of Social Workers*, 1987.

Literacy groups in the community, especially those with bilingual/bicultural facilitators, also effectively move language learning beyond the classroom. A dual language model, like the one employed in the hospital group, enabled learners to access information in English, but with a preview and review in their first language. It used the native language and bilingual/bicultural worker as a bridge between languages, cultures and understandings of wellness. Such literacy practice also suggests the

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advisability of locating other sites where learners could access ESL literacy in already familiar social contexts while struggling to make sense of their unfamiliar new worlds.

Networking

Networking here refers to the ongoing efforts of program staff to maintain contact with personnel from other programs and to meet with groups that support and advocate for immigrant/refugee concerns. A few brief accounts of some of these efforts demonstrate the variety of forms networking took with the Literacy/ESL Program. Our collaboration in planning events across programs sometimes extended to learners' opportunities otherwise inaccessible to them (e.g. invitations to events, participation in tasks). On a programmatic level, networking served as a vehicle of information and exchange for personnel. In addition to the benefits of networking, conflicts about allocation of time arose. Given the numerous meetings and activities, choices had to be made about productive use of time and energy.

Concern for Literacy

Concern for literacy is a literacy cooperative, begun in 1989, made up of agencies concerned about providing maximum service to adult learners in the Providence area. Activities planned by this group strengthened bonds among agencies and celebrated their multiple approaches to literacy instruction. Representatives from Dorcas Place, the Providence School Department's Parent Literacy Program, the Providence Family Learning Center, Genesis Center, and Literacy Volunteers of America regularly attended meetings. Activities planned by the group included: a pot luck lunch on International Women's Day, March 8, 1989; a two day health awareness program; and a morning of presentations by students open to the public in 1990 to celebrate the International Year of Literacy.

Practitioners reviewing the events we held during Concern for Literacy's first year surfaced implications for practice. Our attention to these issues meant facing some inherent tensions in any efforts to produce a product and yet respect process. We realized that, in order to proceed with opportunities that addressed real needs of learners and to present them with worthwhile opportunities, it was critical to enlist the ideas of the intended participants and accompany them through the planning rather than plan apart from them.

Refugee Services Network

Since 1979 individuals in the helping professions have met regularly in committees and sub-committees for the purposes of updating referral information and legislative agendas efforts to improve service. The Indochinese Refugee Steering Committee, convened by the United Way in the late 1970s, evolved into what is today the Refugee Services Network. Since the committee's inception, its sub-committees have focussed on issues of health/mental health, housing, education/ESL and other concerns. Some participants have been involved in the group since the 70s, predating any large scale institutional response to the influx of refugees. The presence of bilingual, bicultural workers at monthly meetings during the last few years enhanced the group's sensitivity to refugees' perceptions of ongoing issues. Our participation in such committees enabled us to connect to learners' larger concerns, by increasing our awareness of their perspectives on specific issues and by informing us of particular conditions in learners' communities. Additionally, we collaborated with refugees in the production of *Ten Years Told*, a collection of photographs and writings of refugees in Rhode Island; we disseminated the booklet as part of a state wide commemoration of the passing of the Refugee Act of 1980.

Immersion in the community is viewed as prerequisite to effective service in Freire's early writing. The literacy circles he initiated as forums for cultural action in Brazil were the contexts from which facilitators most effectively assisted others to read and write their worlds. Freierean applications elsewhere adapt and replicate aspects of this pedagogy; popular education undeniably depends on connectedness with and interrelating with the communities in which it takes place. Outreach efforts around literacy to immigrant and refugee communities depend, at least in part, on linkages with community members and on an understanding of issues with which potential learners identify. Networking often enables educators to know learners better by informing educators of their learners' realities.

Writing Group: Support for bilingual, bicultural workers

Southeast Asian bilingual, bicultural workers in the greater Providence area took advantage of an inservice opportunity provided by their employers during the spring of 1989. Twenty-four students took a three credit course, Topics in Writing for the Helping Professions, at a local college. Fran was simultaneously working within the Literacy/ESL Program and as an adjunct faculty member of the college offering the course through its continuing education department. Upon comple-

tion of the course, learners sought extra support for their ESL literacies. Fran offered the IIRI site and invited learners to use the word processor there for further revision and editing of drafts completed within the course. This invitation occasioned in-creased learner familiarity with the Institute in general and with the Literacy/ESL Program in particular. Bilingual, bicultural workers from the refugee communities are a vital link between their clients and agency services. This particular collaboration illustrates how networking that offers learning can strengthen relationships between service providers (in this case the learners themselves were refugees), and agencies (where the refugees worked) needing ongoing links with refugee and immigrant communities.

In addition to the networking activities described above, ESL/ Literacy Program staff members also participated in various efforts with: the Rhode Island Adult Literacy Council, the Rhode Island Association for Bilingual Education/ESL, the LEP Advisory Committee (RI Department of Education), The Literacy Collaborative, the Refugee Appreciation Committee and the Walk for Literacy. Additionally, staff participated in a national effort as part of a working group exploring exemplary practice in ESL literacy through Aguirre International.

epilogue

The Literacy/ESL Program had a significant impact upon its host ESL agency in two ways -- through providing its own direct service and through affecting the processes of learning and teaching within the other programs of the agency. The Literacy/ESL Program's documentation contained in this volume describes in depth the processes involved in the program's development and operation. The reader may well ask: What about product? What were the program's outcomes? Were the program's objectives met? What about the future?

A comparison of program statistics to the goals set early in the program provide one measure of program success. In the course of its three years of operation, the Literacy/ESL Program served 181 learners in its literacy classes (goal 50). Of these learners, 62 achieved their learning goals, completed the program and entered mainstream ESL or other educational programs, either within the International Institute or in other educational institutions. Five learners left the program to enter employment. Of those who left the program for other reasons, many are on temporary hiatus from their study due to child care problems, a sick or newly arrived relative or other interruption. As of the end of the program 24 were still enrolled.

In addition to learners served in the program's ongoing literacy classes, staff served 837 learners in ESL classes at the Institute and at other agencies. (goal: 1,000). Service to three of these other agencies entailed staff playing an instrumental role in assisting the agencies to set up new literacy/ESL programs.

The program reached 206 teachers and volunteers in 30 agencies through its staff development and technical assistance endeavors. Thirty-two of these educators were teaching staff at the International Institute (goal: 25), 32 were volunteer teachers and tutors at the Institute (goal: 40), and 132 taught at other educational institutions (goal: 100). The program reached at least 331 additional service providers throughout the community (goal unspecified), improving community wide understanding of educational needs of adult non native speakers of English.

As is evident above, the Literacy/ESL Program reached fewer individuals than it intended in some areas, while the program surpassed its expectations in other areas. Not only in numbers

were we to be surprised by the literacy program, however. Far more impressive were the changes engendered by the program. Some changes affected Institute educational staff, both as individuals and as a body. Some occurred within the education division of the agency and some reverberated beyond the agency into the larger service community. These changes, which have been outlined in detail in this documentation, constitute for those participating educators, a greater understanding of the their assumptions as educators, a deeper appreciation of their knowledge and their pursuit of knowledge and a keener awareness of the diversity among them and the strength inherent within that diversity.

One area of significant change within the agency was cross-program awareness. Activities of the Literacy/ESL Program engaged staff of several programs, simultaneously as well as separately. Coparticipation in these activities allowed staff to develop a deeper understanding of the distinctions between programs. Moreover, staff gained an awareness of the common ground among programs and the fact that the things that separate programs -- funding requirements, entry criteria specified by funder, etc. -- are arbitrary. Still, a greater closeness did not result for all staff. Some did not embrace the Literacy/ESL Program; Literacy staff continue to consider the reasons why: mistrust, perceived threat, incompatible approach and others. For some staff an isolation continues, the work of future programs.

A second area of significant internal change occurred with respect to program model with the Institute. Where the model of programs staffed by a coordinator and facilitators has been effective and continues to function effectively for some programs, the Literacy/ESL Program called for a different model soon after its inception. A stated program focus on participatory curriculum development led naturally to a push for parallel program design. Given staff participation in program coordination, selection of funding sources and approaches to them next fell in line, as staff became frustrated at being dictated to as to which funders would be approached and why it must be so. The program advisory committee, selected by agency administration prior to the onset of the program, became a useful resource to staff once staff determined and assigned areas of concentration for each member.

Staff personalities played a key role in the development of parallel segments of the program model. Where insecure or acquiescent staff might have swallowed a program setup which

seemed inappropriate, given the program's mission; those staff endowed with voice and with recognition of their own need for a forum for voice signaled the distress of the program under its original structure. The new structure had its drawbacks: a third full time staff member would have enabled the program to do more; an additional staff member would have added another set of strengths and another voice; a coordinator focussing exclusively on the program might have had more time to pursue added funding. Yet, a third staff would have added another personality and another set of needs, which might have undermined the success of a program fragile in its nascent design. In hiring, program, developers are strongly encouraged to seek experience; yet, as was seen with the Literacy/ESL Program, personalities and their intersection have significant effects on program operation.

A third area of significant change was the area of technical assistance for other ESL providing agencies. Since 1984 the Institute has officially received funding from a local source specifically targeted to activities which help other ESL agencies to improve and enhance their programs. These activities generally involve workshops on methods and materials at other sites and invitation to Institute staff development events. Still, the Institute and the other agencies have considered themselves to be competitors in the field; vying for the same dollars has necessitated that these programs set themselves up for comparison against one another in the eyes of funders and of the public. Through the work of the Literacy/ESL Program, the participatory model extended to collaborative staff development among agencies. The roles of the Institute emerged beyond technical assistance provider, and competition among agencies assumed a back burner position, as staff at many agencies became colearners with a common pursuit: a better understanding of literacy. This change, in combination with intensified cross agency networking, has led to a Rhode Island adult ESL teaching force endowed with far greater resources than one agency alone could provide.

The Literacy/ESL Program's initial three-year endeavor ended in January, 1991. Some funding secured in the middle of the program will allow direct service to continue for one year. Funding is currently being considered for family literacy, intergenerational literacy, and literacy programs developed and staffed by community members themselves. Nationally, funding for literacy has become more specific, an issue of concern to Literacy/ESL Program staff. Their priority is to lessen barriers to participation in educational programs, not to increase them by

limiting access to those of particular groups. Staff's priorities will define that funding which the agency can hope to approach successfully.

At the beginning of the program, staff hoped to provide direct service and through it learn about literacy, to enable teachers to deal with literacy in their ESL classes and to extend that capability to educators at other agencies. Great strides have been made toward all of those objectives; yet, more importantly the Institute has become a body of teachers engaged with students and with educators outside the agency in an ongoing process of learning. All questions have not been answered, nor can they be. More questions constantly arrive. The most important contribution of the Literacy/ESL Program has been the development of an awareness that the answers to those questions are not the goal of our work, but rather the pursuit of the answers and through it the generation of still more questions.